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# MARK TWAIN AND NEW ENGLAND

by

STEWART ANDERSON

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T H E S I S

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by

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# MARK TWAIN AND NEW ENGLAND

TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | PAGES |
|---|---|
| INTRODUCTION | |
| Why Twain Came To Hartford | 1,2 |
| Why He Wrote No Major Work On New England | 3,4 |
| Purpose In Collecting Twain's Sporadic References To New England | 5,6 |
| I. TWAIN AND PHYSICAL NEW ENGLAND | |
| Landscape and Natural Beauties | 8,10 |
| Appearance of Cities, Towns, Homes | 10 |
| Weather | 11 |
| Physical References Indicate Twain Writing Chiefly For New England | 11,12 |
| II. TWAIN AND NEW ENGLAND PEOPLE | |
| Yankee Character Studied From The Platform | 14-18 |
| New England Traits As Twain Saw Them | 18-30 |
| Phlegm | 18,19 |
| Gentility and Snobbishness | 19 |
| Shrewdness and Pinchpenny Tendencies | 19-21 |
| Practicality and Efficiency | 21 |
| Realistic Imagination | 21 |
| Stubborn Predilections | 21,22 |
| Inconsistencies | 22 |
| Colonial Attitude | 22,23 |
| Mass Apathy | 23,24 |
| Blind Sheep Republicanism | 24,25 |
| Garrulity | 25 |
| Eccentricities As Travelers | 25 |
| Conscience | 26-28 |
| Sanctimoniousness | 28-30 |
| Friends And Intimates | 30,31 |
| III. THE HARTFORD BUSINESS MAN | |
| Twain's Penchant For Business | 33 |
| Early Mastery Of Details | 33 |
| The Gold Fever | 33,34 |
| Investments and Inventions | 34 |
| Public Projects | 35 |
| Telephone Stock | 35 |

| | | PAGES |
|---|---|---|
| | Endorsements | 35 |
| | Commercialization Of His Books | 35-37 |
| | Flashes Of Administrative Skill | 37 |
| | Prosperity At Fifty | 37,38 |
| | The Paige Typesetting Machine | 38 |
| | Disaster | 38 |
| | Payment Of Debts | 39 |
| | New Ventures | 39,40 |
| | Charities | 40 |
| | Effect Of Business Interests | 40,41 |
| | Opinions On New England Industry | 41-43 |
| | Mark, The Phenomenon | 43 |
| IV. | TWAIN AND LITERARY NEW ENGLAND | |
| | The Bull In The China Closet | 45-47 |
| | Brooks Versus De Voto | 47-49 |
| | Clemens Baffled By Boston | 49-50 |
| | Temporary Defeat | 50 |
| | An M.A. From Yale | 50 |
| | Asserts His Independence | 50,51 |
| | Subtle Revenge | 52 |
| | Christian Science | 52,53 |
| | Yankee Historical Conceit | 53 |
| | Yankee Dialect | 54 |
| | Yankee Cooking | 54 |
| | Yankee Victorianism | 54-56 |
| | Influence Of Olivia Clemens and Howells | 56 |
| | New England Romantics | 56,57 |
| | Opinion of New England Men Of Letters: | 57-59 |
| | Aldrich | 57 |
| | Longfellow | 57 |
| | Emerson | 57 |
| | Whittier | 57 |
| | Holmes | 57,58 |
| | Howells | 58,59 |
| | Relations With Boston Improve | 59 |
| | Continued References To New England | 60 |
| | Advice From New England Authors | 60,61 |
| | New England's Final Verdict | 61-64 |
| V. | THE INNOCENT AT HOME | |
| | The House Itself | 67,68 |
| | Convenience Of Location | 69,70 |
| | Neighbors | 70,71 |
| | Clemens As Host | 71-76 |
| | Olivia -- The "Boss" | 76-79 |
| | Profanity | 79,80 |

| | | PAGES |
|---|---|---|
| | Twichell | 81-85 |
| | A Letter To Howells | 85-89 |
| | Twain and Hartford | 89-93 |
| | The Cyclist | 93,94 |
| | Home Problems | 94-96 |
| | The Servants | 96,97 |
| | Katie's Summary | 97,98 |
| | Parting | 99,100 |
| | What It Meant To Mark | 100 |
| VI. | SUMMARY -- MARK TWAIN, CONNECTICUT YANKEE | 102-108 |
| VII. | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 109-112 |

# INTRODUCTION

"I am a border ruffian from the State of Missouri. I am a Connecticut Yankee by adoption."--Mark Twain's Speeches[1]

1. Page 19

## INTRODUCTION

In 1871, Mark Twain and his family moved to Hartford. In this small New England town they hoped to find solace from the hardships of the preceding months. Living with the Langdons in Buffalo had resulted, not too surprisingly, in father-in-law trouble, aggravated by the hostile old man's long losing fight against death, and by critical sickness among the rest of the household.

Susy Clemens, writing in childhood a biography of her father, remarks that "their house in Buffalo reminded them too much of dear grandpapa, so they moved to Hartford soon after he died." Twain, citing this in his Autobiography, adds that "Our year and a half in Buffalo had so saturated us with horrors and distress that we became restless and wanted to change, either to a place with pleasant associations or with none at all."[1]

Undoubtedly there were other reasons for the decision. Will Clemens in Mark Twain, His Life and Works tells us that in an earlier visit to Hartford, Twain had been captivated by the physical beauty of the town. There was a thriving literary colony there, and Twain, as we shall see later, wished to try his wares in a New England market.

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine. Vol. 2, pp. 117, 118.

The first year in Hartford offered little comfort. The Clemens's only son, Langdon, died as a result of a cold brought on by what Twain considered his own carelessness in failing to wrap the infant warmly on one of their daily drives. This was but one of the many family catastrophes for which Twain blamed and persecuted himself to the end of his days.

Although this beginning was not auspicious, on the whole the selection of Hartford proved to be a wise one. A brief but intense happiness blessed the Clemenses at Hartford as it never did again in their later wanderings. New England's literary great, and especially William Dean Howells, came constantly to the Farmington Avenue home. The next-door neighbors were the Charles Dudley Warners and the Stowes, and near at hand, too, was Twain's "dearest enemy", the Reverend Joe Twichell. Among these and other intimates there was a communism of good fellowship, and a common joy in the exuberances and prowess of the local tribe of children. In Hartford, too, there was an easy literary atmosphere, free of restraints, impelling Twain to write his satisfaction to a western friend:

> "Fortunately a good deal of experience of men enabled me to choose my residence wisely. I live in the freest corner of the country." [1]

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: New England Indian Summer, p. 194

It was during Twain's thirty and more years of Connecticut citizenship that the bulk of his literature was written. Yet Twain produced not a single book or article on New England during this third-century of residence. Nor did New England, after breaking bread so long with the most conspicuous public and literary figure of the times, publish any major writings proudly proclaiming him as its own.

One might infer a coolness between the man and his adopted region, if the cordiality of the relationship were not so well known. Yankee newspapers and public constantly demonstrated their love, and Twain on the platform spoke occasionally and affectionately of New England people and places, although seldom in a totally serious vein, and never at length.

No, indifference was not the cause on either side. The silence of New England books was due to a paucity of text. Twain's own reticence on the subject, and his frequent absences from New England, made him a very difficult animal to capture and examine.

Twain's silence is understandable when one remembers that his ideas and interests were <u>western</u>, completely formulated before he came east. It was only natural that he should draw water, not from the Connecticut, but from the Mississippi, that he might pour it into the desiccated fields of New England literature. He preferred to broaden the provincialism of the East into a new nationalism of

ideas, rather than to rehash the old, familiar and feebling topics of New England, or to assist New England in self-glorification. He did no injustice to New England. Rather he did it a service, expressed in the personal warmth of the author toward his New England readers, and the new lease on life which he and Howells gave to New England, and American literature.

Twain's vision could not be confined to a town, a region, a country or even a continent. Howells spoke of him as "first of Hartford and ultimately of the solar system."[1] Hartford, to Twain, was an observatory tower. From it, he looked far beyond the city limits toward the Mississippi and the West of his past, or toward the sprawling British empire, or back in time to Adam and then forward to God and the hereafter. He looked particularly for the large injustices in the small distant corners of the earth, and it was this sensitiveness to suffering, incidentally, which made him a close companion of the Hartford clergy.

Twain lived his civic and social interests, and left the remote and cosmic ones to his pen. His cup was full. The New England sectional pride which he so studiously avoided in the workshop showed up in him as a father and

1. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 27.

as a man. It is perhaps more fortunate for New England that he chose to enact his citizenship rather than to write about it, because to the responsibilities of home and community he brought an astounding amount of physical energy. Even the unfriendly critic, Van Wyck Brooks, is compelled to sound a fleeting note of admiration when he writes in The Ordeal of Mark Twain:

> "His home became the springboard of all his motives and his desires. He threw into it as much energy as two ordinary men are able to throw into their life work."[1]

This will explain, perhaps, why the public libraries are not full of books on Mark Twain and New England, and why the subject is fascinatingly elusive. Nothing can be produced to prove that New England moulded Twain's art in any appreciable way. In fact, the reverse seems well established by the leading contemporary critic of Twain, Bernard De Voto, both in his books and in an interview with the writer. Nor can anything be served up to prove that Twain's overall opinion of New England was favorable. Inferences may be found, but not proof.

What, then, is to be gained by the collecting and piecing together of Twain's sporadic references to New England? Only the Sherlockian satisfaction of tracking down

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: The Ordeal of Mark Twain, p. 130.

the scanty evidence for its own interest's sake. Only the pleasure a New Englander feels in attempting a peculiarly Yankee job, and one that has never been done before. Only the knowledge that the results, however imperfect or incomplete, will throw a thin ray of light on the enigma and reveal, albeit hazily, the extent to which Twain accepted New England and was accepted by it.

# I TWAIN AND PHYSICAL NEW ENGLAND

"I reverently believe that the Maker who made us all makes everything in New England but the weather"--*Mark Twain's Speeches*[1]

1. p. 59

## TWAIN AND PHYSICAL NEW ENGLAND

The first of Mark Twain's books published after he moved to New England was Roughing It, in 1872. It bulged with reminiscences of Nevada, California, and the Hawaiian Islands, and dealt particularly with Twain's mining experiences in those years long before he knew or cared anything about the East. No source could seem less promising in the search for Twain's ideas about New England. So it is with surprise bordering on disbelief that the reader who has followed Twain through the magnificent Rockies, marveling and exclaiming, finally arrives at this passage:

> "The brilliant green, the infinite freshness, the spendthrift variety of form and species and foliage--make an Eastern landscape a vision of Paradise itself. The idea of a man falling into raptures over grave and somber California, when that man has seen New England's meadow expanses and her maples, oaks, and cathedral-windowed elms, decked in summer attire, or the opaline splendors of autumn descending upon her forests, comes very near being funny--would be, in fact, but that it is so pathetic."[1]

Nowhere else in his writings does Twain sum up so categorically his opinion of New England natural beauty. Usually he makes only casual mention of visits to particular New Eng-

1. Mark Twain, Roughing It, Vol. 2, p. 125.

land areas, but sometimes he enlarges, revealing through flashing adjective and lyric phrase the almost religious depth and intensity of his response.

> "Father spent two summers in Dublin (New Hampshire), a charming spot where the people and scenery gave him pleasure," says Clara Clemens in My Father, Mark Twain. "He wrote to me from there: 'I am drunk with the autumn foliage. It began weeks ago and I have never drawn a sober breath since. The colors that wash the wide sweep are infinitely tender and subdued and delicate now. Down the slope of Monadnock there's a rippled and ruffled landslide of hellfire toned down for Sunday consumption, the aforetime flames all there, but the fierce anger all gone -- softened down to mottled yellows, every ruffle smitten through with a jet of sunlight, the whole avalanche daintily luminous, exquisitely luminous. The people are lamenting, they say the forest has faded; but it is a mistake to think damage has happened.'" [1]

In his famous speech on The Weather, Twain concedes:

> "There are at least one or two things about that weather which we residents would not like to part with. If we hadn't our bewitching autumn foliage we should still have to credit the weather with one feature which compensates for all its bullying vagaries -- the ice storm; when a leafless tree is clothed with ice from the bottom to the top -- ice that is as bright and clear as crystal; when every bough and twig is strung with ice beads, frozen-dew drops, and the whole tree sparkles cold and white, like the Shah of Persia's diamond plume -- the supremest possibility in art or nature, of bewildering, intoxicating, intolerable magnificence." [2]

1. Clemens, Clara, My Father Mark Twain, p. 266.
2. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 63.

Assuming that Twain, as most men, based his first impressions on physical appearances, his introduction to New England must have been singularly delightful. He became sensuously appreciative, not only of the landscape but also of the towns, the villages, the attractive planning of cities and city parks, the refreshing atmosphere of Yankee country homes.

> "In the beginning Quincy (Missouri) had the aspect and ways of a model New England town; and these she has yet: broad, clean streets, trim, neat dwellings and lawns, fine mansions, stately blocks of commercial buildings."1

> "The 'burnt district' of Boston was commonplace before the fire, but now there is no commercial district in any city in the world that can surpass it -- or perhaps even rival it -- in beauty, elegance and tastefulness."2

> "It is claimed that the atmosphere of the New Hampshire highlands is exceptionally bracing and stimulating, and a fine aid to hard and continuous work. It is a just claim, I think. I came in May and wrought 35 successive days without a break."3

> "Higginson, visiting Emily Dickinson at her father's house in Amherst, 1870, (noted that it was) 'one of those large square mansions so familiar in our older New England towns, surrounded by trees and blossoming shrubs without, and within exquisitely neat, cool, spacious and fragrant with flowers.' There, if there is any region on the continent of Europe where such houses exist, I have never found it."4

1. Mark Twain, Life On The Mississippi, p. 403.
2. Ibid, p. 297.
3. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 783.
4. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 218.

Even so, Twain found that New England exacted a heavy price for her jewels -- and how he did rage!

> "(It was) one of those dismal New England November nights, close upon the end of the month, when the pestiferous New England climate furnishes those regions a shake-down just in the way of experiment and to get its hand in for business when the proper time comes, which is December."[1]

> "The people of New England are by nature forbearing, but there are some things which they will not stand. Every year they kill a lot of poets for writing about 'Beautiful Spring'. -- In the spring, I have counted one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of weather inside of four and twenty hours."[2]

Although Twain refers to New England only infrequently, he uses it more than any other region, in the writer's opinion, as a "home base" with which to compare distant lands and institutions. Without a table of statistics to prove the point, it must be set forth cautiously. However, a careful and unbiased reading points to this conclusion, even without the tabulation.

Going back to the surprisingly rich source, Roughing It, for example, we find that Twain makes very few comparisons; but when he does, they generally point east. There is, first, the already-quoted passage on New England natural beauty, indicating that Twain was conscious of New England even

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 316.
2. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 60.

while absorbed in an exclusively western work. In Roughing It there are not many more than three additional descriptions which Twain throws against a familiar backdrop for the reader's convenience and understanding; and New England provides the backdrop for all three. Writing of the Rockies, of a western city, and of a Hawaiian crater, he says:

> "Nature's kings stood ten, twelve, and even thirteen thousand feet high -- grand old fellows who would have to stoop to see Mount Washington in the twilight."[1]
>
> "The city lies in the edge of a level plain as broad as the State of Connecticut."[2]
>
> "(The floor of the crater) looked like a colossal railroad map of the State of Massachusetts done in chain lightning on a midnight sky."[3]

Throughout his life, Twain continued to conjure up New England in the midst of foreign texts. When to this disposition is added Twain's stated preference for the New England platform, and his acknowledged desire to please Boston, the suggestion is strong that he addressed his ideas primarily to New England people and critics.

1. Mark Twain, Roughing It, Vol. 1, p. 84.
2. Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 95.
3. Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 267

## II TWAIN AND NEW ENGLAND PEOPLE

"All those Salem witches were ancestors of mine! Your people made it tropical for them. -- However, chaff and nonsense aside, I think I honor and appreciate your Pilgrim stock as much as you do yourselves, perhaps" [1] -- Mark Twain's Speeches

1. p. 22.

## TWAIN AND NEW ENGLAND PEOPLE

Even before he married and moved to Hartford, Twain had begun lecturing to the New England public under the auspices of the Redpath Lyceum in Boston. Clemens wished to sell himself in the literary market still dominated by New England, to meet what Van Wyck Brooks in his New England Indian Summer calls "the Boston test,"[1] which was the most formidable obstacle in the path of rising young artists and authors of the day.

Upon the outcome, as Clemens knew, depended his reputation. "Tomorrow night," reads one of the Mark Twain Letters, "I appear for the first time before a Boston audience -- 4,000 critics -- and on the success of this matter depends my future success in New England."[2]

Preparing for the supreme effort required careful planning and experimentation in outlying towns. Twain's official biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, says that in Lowell, Lexington, Concord or New Bedford the lectures were tried and perfected -- or discarded; and that "when the provincial audiences were finally satisfied, then the final test in the

1. Brooks, Van Wyck : New England Indian Summer, p. 8.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 168.

Boston Music Hall was made, and if this proved successful the rest of the season (i.e. in other parts of the country) was safe."[1]

"It took about a month to do these Boston annexes, and that was the easiest and pleasantest month of the four or five which constituted the 'lecture season'",[2] writes Twain in his Autobiography. Apparently Twain preferred Boston because of literary aspiration, but his heart went out to the smaller New England towns.

It was indeed a concession to the critical hegemony of Boston and the warmth of the provincial audiences that Twain lectured in New England at all. He hated the platform, dreading "the medium of travel, the clatter of hotel life, the monotony of entertainment, while, more than most men, he loved the tender luxury of home. -- Undoubtedly he reveled in the triumphs of a platform tour, though at no time did he regard it as a pleasure excursion."[3] Only financial necessity and the need for reputation drove him to the task, and he was constantly threatening to curtain the schedule Redpath made up for him, or cut it out altogether:

> "I have resolved not to lecture outside of the 6 New England states next winter. My Western course could easily amount to

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 444.
2. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 156.
3. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, pp. 443, 444.

> $10,000 but I would rather make 2 or 3 thousand in New England than submit again to so much wearing travel."[1]
>
> "Telegram to Redpath: 'How in the name of God does a man find his way from here to Amherst, and when must he start? Give me full particulars, and send a man with me. If I had another engagement I would rot before I would fill it. S.L. Clemens' This was at the end of February, and he believed that he was standing on the platform for the last time."[2]

Twain in Boston was overwhelmingly successful, except with some of the Brahmins and stuffier critics who "smiled and enjoyed him, but with that condescension which the courtier is likely to accord to motley and the cap and bells. -- Only the great, simple hearted, unbiased multitude, the public, which had no standards but the direct appeal from one human heart to another, could recognize immediately his mightier heritage, could exalt and place him on the throne."[3]

Yes, and the people's response was Twain's own measure. From it he took his cues on the proper timing of pauses, the appropriateness of topics, and the overall merit of his lectures. It was not the Brahmin, but the Yankee farmer, businessman and laborer that helped Twain achieve absolute mastery of his metier. Twain's "was the art that makes you forget the artisanship -- the purest exemplification this country has ever seen."[4]

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.158.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow, Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 452.
3. Ibid, p. 451.
4. Ibid, p. 447.

William Dean Howells was quick to attribute these triumphs on the platform to Clemens' intimate understanding of people. In My Mark Twain he writes:

> "He was such a practised speaker that he knew all the stops of that simple instrument man, and there is no doubt that these results were accurately intended from his unerring knowledge. He was the most consummate public performer I ever saw, and it was an incomparable pleasure to hear him lecture. -- His carefully studied effects would reach the first rows in the orchestra first, and ripple in laughter back to the standees against the wall, and then with a fine resurgence come again to the rear orchestra seats, and so rise from gallery to gallery till it fell back, a cataract of applause from the topmost rows of seats."[1]

But Sam Clemens explained his technique in simpler terms:

> "It is my custom to keep on talking until I get the audience cowed."[2]

The usually infallible Mark made one horrible blunder, of course, in his much-discussed Whittier Birthday Speech, centering his humor around the idea of three drunken bums visiting a California mining camp and posing as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, all of whom were present at the dinner. Twain "did not take into account the religious veneration in which these men were held by those nearest them, so that no one could

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 51.
2. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 265.

well approach them in a personally light or trifling spirit.-- There fell a silence, weighing many tons to the square inch, which deepened from moment to moment, and was broken only by the hysterical and blood-curdling laughter of a single guest, whose name shall not be handed down to infamy."[1]

What happened in this single instance where Twain failed to size up his audience correctly serves but to emphasize his customary skill at appraising accurately and with lightning speed. Twain, through his lectures, was meeting the New England people extensively for the first time, and he must have come to know them rapidly and well to have scored such enormous successes in most of his engagements.

In later speeches and writings, therefore, Twain's estimates of Yankee character must be considered valid despite their infrequency and brevity. The man, after all, was an expert, and had to be. It seems reasonable to accept what little he did write as the product of the same remarkable insight which he exhibited on the platform. His comments are like jigsaw pieces which, pieced together, form a surprisingly detailed and integrated picture -- and one not altogether complimentary. The Yankees, Mark says, reveal:

1. Phlegm

> "Livy darling, I am just in from the lecture (in Worcester, Massachusetts) -- just in from

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 59.

talking to 1700 of the staidest, puritanical people you ever saw -- one of the hardest gangs to move that ever was. By George, the next time I come here I mean to -- well, never mind what I'm going to do. The chairman said 'Can't anybody rouse up our audiences, but by George you fetched 'em and kept 'em at it, too.' 'Fetched your grandmother!' I said -- ' a man couldn't fetch 'em with a hundred thousand yoke of oxen.' " 1

2. Gentility and Snobbishness

"Harte took up his residence at Newport, Rhode Island, that breeding place, that stud farm, so to speak, of aristocracy; aristocracy of the American type; that auction mart where the English nobilities come to trade hereditary titles for American girls and cash."2

"There isn't a suggestion of coarseness or vulgarity in it (the Whittier Birthday Speech) anywhere. What could have been the matter with that house? I can't account for it, but if I had those beloved and revered old literary immortals back here now on the platform at Carnegie Hall I would take that same old speech, deliver it, word for word, and melt them till they'd run all over the stage."3

3. Shrewdness and Pinchpenny Tendencies

"When I was a boy in the back settlements of the Mississippi Valley, where a gracious and beautiful Sunday-school simplicity and unpracticality prevailed, the "Yankee" (citizen of the New England States) was hated with a splendid energy. But religion had nothing to do with it. In a trade, the Yankee was held to be about five times the match of the westerner. His shrewdness, his insight, his judgment, his knowledge, his enterprise, and

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 45.
2. Mark Twain In Eruption, Edited by Bernard de Voto, p. 273.
3. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 15.

> his formidable cleverness in applying these forces were frankly confessed and most competently cursed."[1]
>
> "We talked long with that shrewd Connecticut Yankee, Heber C. Kimball."[2]

Apparently Twain retained and confirmed many of these early impressions, for his writings continue to reflect them. One amusing example is his story of a pair of Yankees bargaining with each other over the two remaining plots in a cemetery, after they have already cheated their friends into buying the least advantageous ones. To make his point sharper, Twain has them brothers:

> " 'How about sile, William?'
>
> 'D's a sandy sile, E's mostly loom.'
>
> 'You may gimme E, then, William; a sandy sile caves in, more or less, and costs for repairs.'
>
> 'All right, set your name down here, John, under E. Now, if you don't mind paying me your share of the fourteen dollars, John, while we're on business, everything's fixed.'
>
> " After some higgling and sharp bargaining the money was paid, and John bade his brother good night and took his leave. There was silence for some moments; then a soft chuckle welled up from William and he muttered: 'I declare for it if I haven't made a mistake. It's D that's mostly loom, not E. And John's booked for a sandy sile, after all.' "[3]

1. Mark Twain: The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg, p. 263.
2. Mark Twain: Roughing It, Vol. 1, p. 116.
3. Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer Abroad And Other Stories, p. 244.

"That publisher of mine in Hartford (American Publishing Company) had an eye for the pennies and he saved them. He did not waste any on the illustrations."[1]

4. Practicality and Efficiency

The Connecticut Yank from King Arthur's Court begins his story: "I was born and reared in Hartford in the State of Connecticut.--So I am a Yankee of the Yankees -- and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose, or poetry in other words."[2]

"It was evident that practical New England was not sorry to be rid of such visionaries (the Jaffa Colonists) and was not in the least inclined to hire anybody to bring them back to her."[3]

"The village -- Dublin -- is bunched together in its own place, but a good telephone service makes its markets handy to all those outliars. I have spelt it that way to be witty. The village executes orders on the Boston plan -- promptness and courtesy."[4]

5. Realistic Imagination

"A Boston newspaper reporter went and took a look at the Slave Ship foundering around in that fierce conflagration of reds and yellows and said it reminded him of a tortoise shell cat having a fit in a platter of tomatoes."[5]

6. Stubborn Predilections

Twain tried to expound his gospel of determinism before the Monday Evening Club in Hartford, with this result:

1. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 243.
2. Mark Twain: A Connecticut Yankee In King Arthur's Court, p. 5.
3. Mark Twain: The Innocents Abroad, Vol. 2, p. 365.
4. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 782.
5. Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Vol. 1, p. 244.

> "Those were the brightest minds in Hartford -- and indeed they were very superior minds -- but my little batch of quite simple and unassailable truths could get no entrance into them, because the entrances were all stopped up with stupid misteachings handed down by stupid ancestors and docilely accepted without examination."[1]

7. Inconsistencies

Having charged the Hartford mind with narrowness in the passage just quoted, Twain later describes it as broad and tolerant on a minor moral issue involving a beer-drinking parson.[2] The inconsistency is probably Hartford's, not Twain's. The same New England which was so rabid in its anti-slavery pronouncements, for example, could be strangely and cruelly aberrant:

> "Dat overseer wuz a Yank, too, outen New England, en anybody down South kin tell you what dat mean. Dey knows how to work a nigger to death and dey knows how to whale 'em, too -- whale 'em till dey backs is welted like a washboard."[3]

> "No Californian gentleman or lady ever abuses or oppresses a Chinaman, under any circumstances, an explanation that seems to be much needed in the East."[4]

8. Colonial Attitude

In the 70's and 80's New England experienced a return of the old colonial feeling toward England which expressed

1. Mark Twain In Eruption, Edited by Bernard De Voto, p. 241.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 326.
3. Mark Twain: Puddinhead Wilson, p. 152.
4. Mark Twain: Roughing It, Vol. 2, p. 111.

itself in the form of literary subservience and public animosity outside of the literary circles. Twain caught up the public, democratic, rebellious feelings and championed them in books such as the Connecticut Yankee and The Prince And The Pauper, fuming incessantly against the monarchial system. "His Hartford neighbors, who had taken him into their hearts and homes, could not see England, through the eyes of a Connecticut Yankee, damned enough."[1]

In a quieter mood, Twain wrote of the Anglo- American relationship:

> "All English individuals are kind and likable -- the newspapers are snobbish, pretentious, and they scoff at America, or contemptuously ignore her. English preachers and statesmen try to draw the two nations together in friendship and mutual respect. The newspapers, with what seems a steady and calculated purpose, discourage this. The newspapers are going to win in this fight. For some years a custom has been growing up in our literature to praise everything English and do it affectionately. This is not met halfway, and so it will cease. English individuals like and respect American individuals, but the English nation despises America and Americans. But this does not sting us as it did when we were smaller."[2]

9. Mass Apathy

> "The whole population of New England meekly took their turns, for years, in standing up in the railway trains, without so much as

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: The Ordeal of Mark Twain, p. 235.
2. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 156.

a complaint above their breath, till at last these uncounted millions were able to produce exactly one single independent man (Twain himself) who stood to his rights and made the railroad give him a seat. -- It will take New England forty years to breed his fellow. -- For years people and carriages used to wait as much as twenty minutes on a stretch while New England trains monopolized (the Asylum Street crossing). I used to hear men use vigorous language about that insolent wrong -- but they waited, just the same. -- We are discreet sheep; we wait to see how the drove is going, and then go with the drove."[1]

And by way of contrast --

"The best English characteristic is its plucky and persistent and individual standing up for its rights. No other people approaches England in this admirable, this manliest of all traits. It makes every man in the whole nation a policeman."[2]

10. Blind Sheep Republicanism

"From that day forth Twichell's life was a good deal of a burden to him. (He had voted the Democratic ticket.) To use a common expression, his congregation 'soured' on him and he found small pleasure in the exercise of his clerical office -- unless, perhaps, he got some healing through the privilege of burying some of those people of his. It would have been a benevolence to bury the whole of them, I think."[3]

"(Later Twichell became a political hypocrite). He sacrificed his political independence and saved his family by it. In the circumstances

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 9.
2. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 140.
3. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 21.

this was the highest loyalty. I have never found any real fault with him for voting his infernal Republican ticket."[1]

11. Garrulity of Sea-Faring Men

One of Twain's stories [2] describes the loquacity of an old New England sea captain who starts many an exciting yarn only to lose it in a maze of digressions and side remarks. The seaman's chatter fills several pages and is too inconsequential to quote here. Twain may or may not have considered it typical.

12. Eccentricities As Travelers

Another passage that may or may not be representative:

"(The young New Englander in Switzerland) wore a low-crowned, narrow-brimmed straw hat, with a broad blue ribbon around it which had a white anchor embroidered on it in front; nobby short-tailed coat, pantaloons, vest, all trim and neat and up with the fashion; red striped stockings, very low-quarter patent-leather shoes, tied with a black ribbon; blue ribbon around his neck, wide-open collar; tiny diamond studs; wrinkleless kids; projecting cuffs, fastened with large oxydized silver sleeve buttons, bearing the device of a dog's face -- English pug. He carried a slim cane, surmounted with an English pug's head with red glass eyes. Under his arm he carried a German grammar -- Otto's. His hair was short, straight and smooth, and presently when he turned his head a moment, I saw that it was nicely parted behind. He took a cigarette out of a dainty box, stuck it into a meerschaum holder which he carried in a maroon case, and reached for my cigar."[3]

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 25.
2. Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer Abroad And Other Stories, p. 257.
3. Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Vol. 1, p. 281.

13. Conscience

> "He is thirty-seven feet high now, and the stateliest figure in America. -- He is the most active and energetic member of the New England Conscience Club; is president of it."[1]

This is from Twain's fantasy, Facts Concerning The Recent Carnival Of Crime In Connecticut. The title, of course, is Twain's confession to the local police that he has destroyed his conscience and gone on the rampage. You can take it seriously if you wish, but most people don't. At any rate, the story is one of the most entertaining Twain has written, in which the author's conscience takes shape and interviews him in his home. The conscience is a sorry-looking little gnome, his master has neglected him so, and Clemens after berating him for a "nagging, badgering, fault-finding, execrable savage"[2] who finds fault on both sides of a man's action, tears him up and throws him in the fire. Not before the little wretch has given us the local gossip, however, revealing which of the neighborhood consciences have prospered, and which failed, depending upon how tough-minded their respective owners happen to be. Now Tom Smith next door, he belongs to a meek little stuffed shirt, and so he's sitting pretty as president of the New England Conscience Club, and so on.

No one can miss the point. Twain is having a jolly time with the celebrated New England Conscience. On the other hand,

1. Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer Abroad And Other Stories, p. 321.
2. Ibid, p. 314.

Twain is not limiting himself to New England. Indeed, you might say that New England comes into this picture quite by accident, for Twain's ideas on this as upon most of his fundamental topics were formed in the West, out of the Calvinistic influences of his youth. Twain preferred to call Conscience the "Moral Sense," and in the bitterness of his later years he developed the Moral Sense theme into a kind of club with which he lashed out furiously at the Depravity of Man. New England came in for its full share of the beating, but had no special monopoly of it. New England was pained -- but so was the world -- when the so-called humorist published The Mysterious Stranger and innumerable sour comments such as these:

> "No brute ever does a cruel thing --that is for those with the Moral Sense. When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it -- only man does that. Inspired by that mongrel Moral Sense of his. --There shouldn't be any wrong; and without the Moral Sense there couldn't be any."[1]

> "It don't make no difference whether you do right or wrong, a person's conscience ain't got no sense, and just goes for him anyway. If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does I would pison him. It takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides, and yet ain't no good, nohow. Tom Sawyer he says the same."[2]

1. Mark Twain: The Mysterious Stranger, p. 53.
2. Mark Twain: Huckleberry Finn, p. 321.

> "It is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them."[1]

14. Sanctimoniousness

> "Father had no faith in any orthodox religion, but to please Mother frequently accompanied her to church and tried to listen to the service even though he did not take part in it. His intimate friend, Joseph Twichell, was our clergyman, and I remember feeling deeply embarrassed once when Father said to Mr. Twichell, 'Joe, that's a clever trick of yours to pound the pulpit extra hard when you haven't anything to say.' Twichell laughed, and replied, 'Mark, it was clever of you to discover it.'"[2]

> "Jewell said the (Hartford) church would trust me to take up a collection -- with a bell punch. -- Congregational singing reminds one of nothing but the dental chair. -- What God lacks is convictions, stability of character. He ought to be a Presbyterian or a Catholic or something, not try to be everything. -- When one reads Bibles, one is less surprised at what the Deity knows than at what he doesn't know. -- Satan must be granted the possession of executive abilities of the highest order. For untold centuries he has maintained the imposing position of spiritual head of 4/5 of the human race. He hasn't a single salaried helper; the Opposition employ a million."[3]

You are reading Mark Twain at his mildest. The Puritan's brand of worship irritated him no more and no less than its counterpart elsewhere. In London he wrote, "The church here

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 347.
2. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 26.
3. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, 170, 130, 344, 385,343.

rests under the usual charge -- an obstructor and fighter of progress; until progress arrives, then she takes the credit. Whatever the Church damns is saved; whatever it opposes, prospers -- like anti-slavery and evolution."[1]

Although Clemens was rebelling chiefly against the Calvinistic God he grew up with, the One that introduced Himself at Hartford seems to have been but a small improvement -- with manners not sufficiently amended to lure him into Twichell's fold. To Twichell himself, Mark managed to say "God bless you, Joe, and all of your house,"[2] but the invocation was probably to a rather different Being than Joe Twichell and the Hartforders called upon in their prayers. Daughter Clara furnishes a hint:

> "We seemed to live in the arms of nature during the lovely New England winters. Father would sit by the hour watching the bewildering miracles of little ice pictures. And often I saw tears come to his eyes, for great beauty overwhelmed and moved him. I wondered how his adoration of nature could coincide with his doubt of the existence of a creative God. Later, I knew that he was merely objecting to a smaller human conception of the Supreme Being. He possessed a reverent nature and a humble one."[3]

Despite Clara's affirmation, despite Cousin Cyril's pamphlet calling attention to several manifestations of faith in Twain's writings [4] most of the evidence written in New

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.313.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 636.
3. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 44.
4. Clemens, Cyril: Mark Twain's Religion.

England points the other way. It was the God of Missouri, and He of Hartford, who struck down Susy Clemens in the Farmington Avenue home and robbed Mark Twain "of our greatest treasure in the midst of her blooming talents and personal graces. You want me to believe it is a judicious, a charitable God that runs this world. Why, I could run it better myself."[1]

---

Although Twain saw little in the Yankees' to commend, he seems to have found them no worse, and possibly he considered them slightly better, than his "damned human race" elsewhere. "Man was made at the end of the week when God was tired,"[2] he asserted; but it is apparent that he warmed to the loathsome creature in spite of himself. He had innumerable friends in all parts of the world, and due to his own choice of residence, the largest proportion of them were New Englanders. Had he lived chiefly in New York, they would have been principally New Yorkers. Or in California, Californians. Mark Twain was like that, in taking his neighbors to heart and giving of himself.

The New Englanders closest to him included authors Willian Dean Howells, Thomas Baily Aldrich, Charles Dudley Warner, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Harriet Beecher Stowe;

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 179.
2. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 381.

General Hawley, Reverend Twichell, Atlantic-editor James T. Fields, sculptor Karl Gerhardt, business-agent F.G.Whitmore, and neighbors Henry C. Robinson and Edward F. Bruce. It is inadvisable to attempt a full list; someone, less known if no less intimate, would inevitably and unjustly be omitted from it.

Of all his intimates, the Twichells and Howellses were his cherished. Clemens and these good folk exchanged fervid expressions of loyalty and love. Twain's letters to Twichell are full of "Dear Old Joe" and I love you and Harmony." On the occasion of Olivia Clemen's death, the Twichells wrote, "Dear, Dear Mark -- There is nothing we can say. What is there to say? But here we are -- with you all every hour and every minute -- filled with unutterable thoughts; unutterable affection for the dead and for the living. Harmony and Joe."[1] The Twain-Twichell friendship was one of the most beautiful and moving ever known to life or literature.

In cities neighboring New England and still under her cultural influence, there were many more dear friends, particularly in Manhattan, where Twain was known as the "belle of New York," and in Elmira, N.Y. It would be folly, again, to try to name them all, but Brander Matthews, Theodore Crane, and Henry Ward Beecher must be mentioned, as must the financier, Henry Rogers, who did so much to steer Sam Clemens, New England business man, out of bankrupcy.

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 1220.

## III THE HARTFORD BUSINESS MAN

"I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55." -- Mark Twain's Letters.[1]

1. p. 543.

## THE HARTFORD BUSINESS MAN

Mark Twain -- quartz mill worker, pocket miner, prospector, newspaper reporter, river pilot, author, publisher -- continued in Hartford his extraordinary business career.

His early experiences had sharpened his business judgment and made him a master of details. He had memorized over one thousand miles of Mississippi River landmarks -- rocks, points of land, trees, hazards, a myriad of physical objects which changed in appearance as the steamboat churned toward them, and which never looked the same under varying lights or shadows or after a sudden rise or fall in the river. In mental retentiveness, he must have been the match of a dozen ordinary business executives. Yet he threw away these talents at Hartford. His business affairs showed vision but impracticality. He became impatient with details. Perhaps he felt King River had exhausted his powers.

The gold fever of his mining days never left him. In Elmira and Hartford he looked back ruefully to those rich pockets of ore he had <u>almost</u> discovered, and those million dollar finds he failed to cash because of some accident, carelessness, or technicality. "It reads like a wild fancy sketch, but the evidence is easily obtainable. I can always

have it to say that I was absolutely and unquestionably worth a million dollars, once, for ten days."[1] Roughing It, especially, is full of these laments.

Hartford offered no mines. There were "no holes in the ground into which to empty money and effort, but there were plenty of equivalents -- inventions, stock companies, and the like."[2] Clemens never ceased to invest and invent. He lost over a half-million dollars, some of it upon investments which were good risks, as the Charles L. Webster Company, his own publishing house -- but most of it upon wild and worthless projects.

These included a patent steam generator -- a steam pulley -- a new method of marine telegraphy -- a worthless watch company -- a stillborn insurance company -- a new engraving process called "kaolatype" -- the abominable Paige Typesetting Machine -- a patent for his own history game -- patent grape scissors -- plasmon, a new panacea -- the self-pasting "Mark Twain Scrap Book" -- a patent cash register -- a patent, spiral hair pin. There were many more, Paine tells us.

> "He invented, among other things, a waistcoat enabling the wearer to dispense with suspenders, a shirt requiring no studs, a perpetual calendar watch-charm, a method of casting brass dies for stamping book covers and wall paper, and a postal to supplant the money order in common use."[3]

1. Mark Twain: Roughing It, Vol. 1, p. 287.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 725.
3. Brooks, Van Wyck: The Ordeal Of Mark Twain, p. 132.

He dreamed up magnificent public enterprises that were never realized. He planned to build a railway from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf, for example. As a joke, he proposed a monument to Adam at Elmira. Later he became serious and enlisted public support. He visualized a revolutionary magazine, "The Universal." He wanted to organize a grand, commercialized tour of authors.

During 1882 alone, Twain squandered one hundred thousand dollars. In that same year, he met an obscure inventor named Bell, who was trying to capitalize a queer contraption people talked into. Bell pressed his stock upon Clemens, but the author refused. The inventor persisted, cutting the price lower and lower. This convinced Clemens the telephone stock was so much paper. He dismissed Bell and bragged to his friends that, for once, he had resisted temptation.

On occasion, Clemens lent his name and reputation to new developments, without financing them. Once he wrote enthusiastic letters endorsing a so-called "Loisette Memory System" which, he claimed, would redeem the damned human race. (Incidentally, kaolatype and Mark Twain's history game were to do that also.) He recommended the fountain pen, the typewriter, the bicycle, the telephone, after its success, and other 19th century inventions as they came along, and was generally the first American author to be equipped with them.

His books, too, he looked upon as commercial ventures.

He produced and marketed them to meet the inordinate expenses of his Hartford home. He confessed to potboilers, and when his wife Olivia reproached him, "Youth dear, one does not act honorably for the sake of reward or even approbation," he replied, "I do. I want payment in some coin for everything I do. If I can't get peace and joy in return for propping up my blatherskite of a crumbling soul, then I'll let her rot and the quicker the better."[1]

To be fair, one must weigh this harsh admission against several facts. It was said in a dark and bitter moment, at the time of Susy's death. Furthermore, Clemens habitually looked for base motives in himself, and exaggerated them to justify his deterministic beliefs. The unquestionable merit of his best writings points to motives other than money, even though money furnished the driving power. Clemens, at least, was frank about it. At the end of a hard day's work, he delighted in calculating the number of pages written and the amount of money thereby earned. Paine says he confused quantity with quality. So he did -- but the quality seems not to have suffered too much for the confusion; the world will go on enjoying Mark Twain for a great many years to come.

Having written a good book, he promoted and exploited it to the fullest. Having dashed off a potboiler, he did the same.

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 180.

In the hunt for gold, he turned often to the novel and sensational: a book burlesquing the rules of etiquette, or an "exclusive" story of the Pope's life, for all good Catholics to read.

In spite of his constant losses, Clemens was no hopeless business fool. In the end, he got the leaking ship into port, and even during the rough voyage he showed occasional surprising flashes of administrative skill. To General Grant he gave an estimated circulation figure on the proposed Memoirs which turned out to be uncannily accurate. With what may have been acquired Yankee shrewdness, he defended the national hero against swindle. When Huckleberry Finn was published, Clemens supervised the canvassing and subscription sales, and wrote hard-boiled instructions worthy of a high-salaried sales manager. He went down to Washington occasionally and battled with the legislature for a revision of national copyright laws, insisting that literary ideas were as much a man's property as real estate. A lawyer could not have moved those dignitaries, but Clemens did. Congress chuckled at first, but finally broke down and voted a 14 year extension.

At the age of fifty, he was getting a tremendous yield from his books, especially the Grant Memoirs and Huckleberry Finn. This and his expected returns from the Paige Typesetting Machine and other fliers, led him to declare, "I am

frightened at the proportions of my prosperity. It seems to me that whatever I touch turns to gold."[1]

His enthusiasm for the typesetter "went out of this world," as the current saying goes.

> "All the other inventions of the human brain sink nearly into commonplaces contrasted with this awful mechanical miracle. Telephones, telegraphs, locomotives, cotton-gins, sewing machines, Babbage calculators, Jacquard looms, perfecting presses, all mere toys, simplicities! The Paige Compositor marches alone and far in the land of human inventions."[2]

He predicted "the American business alone would earn thirty-five million dollars a year, and the European business twenty million dollars more. To his nephew, Sam Moffett, visiting him one day, he declared that it would take ten men to count the profits from the typesetter. -- He covered pages with figures that never ran short of millions, and frequently approached the billion mark."[3]

In 1893, the typesetter idea collapsed and the Charles L. Webster Company, hugely involved, came tumbling after. Clemens, at 58, was ruined. He fell back, at last, upon sober judgment and good sense, placed his affairs in the hands of Henry Rogers, and made a fatiguing lecture tour around the world to pay off his obligations. The money he

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 831.
2. Ibid, p. 910.
3. Ibid, pp. 912, 906.

had lost for others concerned him more than his own failure. He paced back and forth at night, worrying about his responsibility to these people, until Rogers sent an optimistic letter telling him to stop it -- that the recovery plans were drawn up and sure to succeed.

Most of Twain's creditors were patient and sympathetic, but there were some who declared "he should turn over his copyrights, his Hartford home, and whatever other odds and ends could be discovered. -- They were bent on devouring every pound of flesh in sight and picking the bones afterward. -- One creditor refused to consent to any settlement except immediate attachment of earning and belongings."[1] Some of the vultures were undoubtedly New Englanders, verifying Twain's opinion of the Yankee character at its worst.

When the last debt was paid, the newspapers burst out with hozannas and printed long editorials heralding Mark Twain as a second Walter Scott. It would have been more appropriate if Walter Scott had been given the second place. There was no rivalling Clemens in monetary extremes.

One might suppose that Clemens had had enough of foolishness, but within a month after the debts were paid he was consulting with Szcepanik for American rights to a wonderful carpet-pattern machine, and "was planning to organize a company with a capital of fifteen hundred dollars to control

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, pp. 984, 1007.

the carpet-weaving industries of the world. He invited Standard Oil to furnish the capital for it. He was always putting 'twenty-five or forty thousand dollars,' as he said, into something that promised multiplied returns."[1]

At least, the crisis was over. More and more of his funds could be subscribed to nobler interests. Private acts of charity and benevolence had characterized the generous Clemens from the first moment he set foot in New England. It was Mark Twain who "discovered" Helen Keller and the sculptor Gerhardt, and contributed to their education. He felt the white race owed the negro a very special debt; and so he did his part, talking to colored congregations, subscribing to their funds, sending colored students to college -- one of them to Yale. He honored requests from these dark people that would have thrown him into profane tantrums, were the applicants white. His partiality was so great that Olivia Clemens thought it her duty to advise him, "Consider every man colored until he is proved white."[2]

He gave money to so many Hartford causes that he was finally snowed under with crank letters, and had to employ a business agent, F.G.Whitmore, to help him handle his affairs.

The effect of business interests on his literary output

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, pp. 1056, 1150.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.394.

was, of course, considerable. It horrified the Brahmins and continues to horrify some of our hypersensitive moderns, especially Van Wyck Brooks -- but more of that later. It was only natural that Mark Twain, business man and inveterate traveler, should write of steamboats, steamships, railroads, hotel conveniences, telegraph services, the growth of cities and commercial areas -- all the material interests of an expanding America. He was product-minded -- quick to spy a box of "petrified" Boston crackers in Europe, or to be reminded of a tin of Connecticut tobacco while in Africa. Of New England industry he says very little, but this little is characteristically pungent:

> "The Boston and Maine Railway still uses the cars it employed in its early business fifty years ago; still passes drinking water around per teapot and tin cup, and still uses soft coal and vomits the gritty product of it into those venerable cars at every window and crack and joint. A memorial museum of George Washington's relics could not excite any considerable interest if it were located in that decayed town and the devotee had to get to it over the Boston and Maine."[1]

> "I was kind of bored on the train and I bought some newspapers -- New Haven newspapers -- and there was not much news in them, so I read the advertisements."[2]

> "I had in my mind at that time the American Publishing Company of Hartford -- I suspected that they had been swindling me for ten years."[3]

1. Mark Twain in Eruption, Edited by Bernard De Voto, p. 293.
2. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.79.
3. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 27.

The Hartford Courant had been bitterly against the nomination of Blaine for Presidency, but after his election and "within a fortnight, the Courant had acquired some facility in praising where it had so long censured; within another month the change in its character was become complete -- and to this day it has never recovered its virtue entirely."[1]

"Gentlemen, I am glad, indeed, to assist in welcoming the distinguished guest of this occasion to a city whose fame as an insurance center has extended to all lands, and given us the name of being a quadruple band of brothers working sweetly hand in hand -- the Colt's arms company making the destruction of our race easy, and convenient, our life insurance citizens paying for the victims when they pass away, Mr. Batterson perpetuating their memory with his stately monuments, and our fire-insurance companies taking care of their hereafter."[2]

"To the President of Western Union, in New York. 'The Pines,' York Harbor, Maine. --- I have been here a month and a half, and by testimony of friends, reinforced by personal experience, I now feel qualified to claim as an established fact that the telegraphic service here is the worst in the world except at Boston. Being afraid of the telegraph, which I think ought not to be used in times of hurry and emergency, I asked that the desired message be brought to me by some swift method of transportation. By the milkman, if he was coming this way."[3]

Copy of letter to Gas Company, Hartford, Feb. 12, 1891. "Dear Sirs: Some day you will move me almost to the verge of ir-

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 19.
2. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 249.
3. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 722.

> ritation by your chuckle-headed Goddamned fashion of shutting your Goddamned gas off without giving any notice to your Goddamned parishioners. Several times you have come within an ace of smothering half of this household in their beds and blowing up the other half by this idiotic, not to say criminal, custom of yours. And it has happened again today. Haven't you a telephone? Ys., S.L. Clemens"[1]

It is time to draw a breath!

Here was a strange fellow, for sure. By consorting with Yankee traders and tycoons, the very people he so loved to lampoon in his writings, Mark Twain found perfect expression for his business and speculatory impulses. No other region in the country offered a more natural outlet for this side of him than did New England. It was the most highly industrialized, and closely linked with the great neighboring metropolis of New York City, where the very air was charged with commercial adventure.

Upon his lifetime career of crazy finance, the Hartford business man spent superhuman energy, and still could devote himself prodigally to his New England home and friendships. One would suppose the man exhausted himself upon New England in this double capacity. But no -- he wrote, incidental to all this, thirty-five books and as much again in unpublished manuscript. How did he do it? No one will ever be able to give a complete answer. Mark was a phenomenon.

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 212.

## IV TWAIN AND LITERARY NEW ENGLAND

"'Revelation XII.6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God.' 'That is Boston. I recognize it, madam.'"--Mark Twain: Christian Science[1]

1. p. 23.

## TWAIN AND LITERARY NEW ENGLAND

> "He would storm into Cambridge in his great sealskin coat, with his tousled red hair and wild moustache, and fall asleep in a bed at Howells's with a lighted cigar in his mouth. Once he took a room at Parker's and left the gas burning for two or three days, while he wandered about in his evening clothes, muffled in his overcoat. Most of the Cambridge circle looked at him askance."[1]

The bull was in the china closet, and repercussions of the crash were heard even decades after Twain's death. In 1919, E.B.Osborn, a British critic, reported letters from Americans who still "boiled with rage over the way Mark Twain was treated by the literary high muck-a-mucks at Boston."[2] Even later, in the 20's and 30's, two New England critics, Van Wyck Brooks and Bernard De Voto, gave opposite accounts of the bull's antics. Both critics agreed on one thing, however. Twain got a royal snubbing, whether or not he deserved it:

> "It was as a savage that the province received him. To this day Cambridge believes that he customarily appeared there drunk, and Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich was sure that he was

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: New England Indian Summer, p. 208.
2. Belaboring The Brahmins Again, Literary Digest, Vol. 63, No. 1, October 4, 1919, p. 31.

> drunk when her husband brought him home to a dinner she could not force herself to serve. -- How could the province understand him? It took its tunes from sheltered gentlemen whose experience included no single item of his. They had studied -- traveled -- philosophized -- wrapped forever in the swaddlings of Yankee morality. Twain had observed nightriding, and lynching, the flogging of slaves, reiterated murder. Commonplaces of lust and corruption, of violence and subordination and cruelty, of human squalor and human depravity, which had been implicit in his mind since childhood, had never, even by rumor, entered this aseptic society. -- He had backed his opinion with a duelling pistol. -- Clearly this was not Mr. Longfellow. -- There was no possibility that he could be welcomed."[1]

When William Lyon Phelps asserted that the stimulation to Mark Twain's invention by the New England men of letters was, next to his marrying Olivia Langdon, the best thing that ever happened to him,[2] he was correct, but in the negative sense. The critics dearest to Twain "did their loving best to ruin his work; and failed."[3] The Boston and Cambridge literary circles saw to it that he stayed in his place. Even at the Atlantic dinners, he was 'below the salt' -- given a seat of honor, but not of the greatest honor. Paine says "He did not sit on the dais with Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Howells, and Aldrich (even though) we of a later

1. De Voto, Bernard: Mark Twain's America, p. 193.
2. Phelps, William Lyon: Mark Twain, Yale Review, Vol. 25, No. 2, December 1935, p. 309.
3. Leaccck, Stephen: Mark Twain, p. 64.

period remember him always as the center of every board, the one supreme figure, his splendid head and crown of silver hair the target of every eye."[1]

The gentility resented his western manners, his flippancy, his occasional cheap jokes, his open irreverence for the Brahmin gods. They abhorred his constant mention of money, fortune, and commerce, and the terrible charm he exercised over those of plebeian and business tastes.

Matthew Arnold, visiting in Boston, and learning that Howells had gone to hear Clemens lecture, exclaimed "Oh, but he doesn't like that sort of thing, does he?"[2]

The true Yankee great, including Howells, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, and Whittier, encouraged Clemens, but the supercilious lesser lights shut the door upon him and were silent. So the genteel opposition to Twain was not adequately voiced until modern times, when Van Wyck Brooks wrote The Ordeal Of Mark Twain, going into characteristically Cambridgian shudders. In his supersensitiveness, in his abstruse definitions of art, Mr. Brooks confesses himself born about 50 years too late. He and old Cambridge would have hit it off well.

Mr. Brooks calls Twain, "the business man's writer," the champion of Philistinism, the playboy, the clown, the money seeker to the end, in whose breast there struggles an artistic

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 731.
2. Ibid, p. 758.

impulse, but it is tainted and inhibited by the circumstances of his life. Frustration drives him to use that old escape device -- humor. He is afraid to speak out seriously on contemporary topics; the few opinions he does write are purposedly withheld until after his death. Mark Twain is so much drivel. Let us "put away childish things and walk the stage as poets do." [1]

De Voto, who has given much of his critical life to Mark Twain, who is in possession of all the valuable unpublished manuscripts, and who is far and away the leading Mark Twain authority of the country, promptly countered: "Mr. Brooks dislikes humor. -- Judgments that a psycho-analyst would make only after months of probing a living mind leap to Mr. Brooks' pen when he reads a single line of type, frequently not even Mark Twain's. Mr. Brooks selects (only) what data will support his theory. -- Mr. Brooks' thinking represents not a superficial knowledge of America before the War, but no knowledge whatsoever. -- His contradictions range from the most superficial to the most profound."[2]

After citing, impressively, page after page of stark inconsistencies, De Voto concludes:

> "It is silly to dispute about words and idle to enquire what Mr. Brooks may mean by creation and the actual process of art.---

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: The Ordeal Of Mark Twain, p. 267.
2. De Voto, Bernard: Mark Twain's America, pp. 224-239.

> The mind here assailed produced Life On The Mississippi and Pudd'nhead Wilson. It created The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. It made a world and filled it with living creatures. If this is not creation, if it is not the actual process of art, then one is not troubled by the possibly mystical meaning the words may have for Mr. Brooks."[1]

De Voto, with his vastly greater command of the subject, and strict adherence to fact, seems to take the round. However, we owe a great deal to Mr. Brooks for elaborating upon the insular type of Boston mind which was the bane of Mark's literary existence. Mr. Brooks' own mind is not dissimilar. It is, perhaps, more psycho-analytical -- and less provisioned in the history department. But there is a definite cerebral resemblance in the misty artistic processes, in the squeamish reactions, in the crying out "oh, horrors!" at the thought of Mark Twain, business man, crashing the gates of the elect.

Clemens could not understand people of Brooks' stamp any more than they could understand him. He was frankly baffled by their idioms, their interests, their smug and narrow concepts of what constitutes literature. When Howells sent him a book that was popular among the smart sets of Boston, Clemens said of it,

> "It is charmingly written, but it flies too high for me. Its concretest things are filmy abstractions, and when I lay my grip on one of them and open my hand,

1. De Voto, Bernard: Mark Twain's America, p. 238.

> I feel as embarrassed as I used to feel when I thought I had caught a fly."[1]

The Whittier Birthday catastrophe ended his hope of pleasing fastidious Boston. He gave up. "He believed that he was ruined forever, so far as his Boston associations were concerned, and when he confessed all the tragedy to Mrs. Clemens it seemed to her also that the mistake could never be wholly repaired."[2]

Mark expiated the Whittier transgression by persecuting himself, by branding himself inferior. Eleven years afterwards, when Yale bestowed her M.A. upon him, he was still eating humble pie, and wryly observed, "I am the only literary animal of my particular subspecies who has ever been given a degree by any college in any age of the world, as far as I know."[3] An affectionately indignant answer came back from New Haven, protesting,

> "You are 'the only literary animal of your particular subspecies' in existence, and you have no cause for humility in the fact. Yale has done herself at least as much credit as she has done you, and 'don't you forget it.'"[4]

Yale's action may have given him courage. One year later, a new Mark Twain announced his independence of the Brahmins and their stuffier satellites:

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine p. 545.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 605.
3. Ibid, p. 868.
4. Ibid, p. 868.

"I have been misjudged, from the very first. I have never tried in even one single instance to help cultivate the cultivated classes. I was not equipped for it, either by native gifts or training. And I never had any ambition in that direction, but always hunted for bigger game, the masses.

The critic has actually imposed upon the world the superstition that a painting by Raphael is more valuable to the civilizations of the earth than is a chromo; and the august opera than the hurdy-gurdy and the villagers' singing society; and Homer than the little everybody's poet whose rhymes are in all mouths today and will be in nobody's mouth next generation--the superstition, in a word, that the vast and awful comet that trails its cold lustre through the remote abysses of space once a century and interests and instructs a cultivated handful of astronomers is worth more to the world than the sun which warms and cheers all the nations every day and makes the crops to grow.

The thin top crust of humanity--the cultivated -- are worth pacifying, worth pleasing, worth coddling, worth nourishing, and preserving with dainties and delicacies, it is true; but to be caterer to that little faction is no very dignified or valuable occupation, it seems to me; it is merely feeding the overfed. It is not that little minority who are already saved that are best worth trying to uplift, I should think, but the mighty mass of the uncultivated underneath. -- They cannot have the opera, but the hurdy-gurdy and the singing class lift them a little way toward that far light; they will never know Homer, but the passing rhymester leaves them higher than he found them."1

1. Mark Twains's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, pp. 527, 526.

Then Mark took a subtle revenge upon the hostile Bostonians. Dropped into his works at wide intervals, so that they are scarcely noticeable, are many caustic digs at the objectionable elements of Boston and her New England subjects. We have already noted his treatment of Yankee character. In similar vein he deals with other New England materials. Sometimes his missiles are softly couched. Sometimes they are barbed, especially when Boston is mentioned.

The city had become, as Van Wyck Brooks tell us in New England Indian Summer, a harborer of new religions, and of the occult. Highbrow Bostonians were dabbling at Christian Science when Mark Twain wrote his famous attack upon Mrs. Eddy. Probably he was not disappointed if some of his shafts struck Beacon Hill as well as the Mother Church. While growling at the church hierarchy and Mrs. Eddy's Key To The Scriptures, that "devilish little book with hell in its bowels"[1] he could commit secondary murder upon a number of Boston parishioners. There must have been infinite satisfaction in lines like these:

> "The Christian-Science-Mother-Church and Bargain-Counter in Boston peddles all kinds of spiritual wares to the faithful, and always on one condition -- cash, cash in advance."[2]

1. Mark Twain: Christian Science, p. 344.
2. Ibid, pp. 68,69.

> "Christian-Science literary discharges are a monopoly of the Mother-Church Headquarters Factory in Boston; none genuine without the trade-mark of the Trust. You must apply there and not elsewhere."[1]

Clemens felt that Bostonians and New Englanders had an exaggerated opinion of their importance, especially their historical importance; and so, here and there, he pricked the bubble, showing how little the westerners and foreigners knew or cared about Yankee renown.

Huck Finn, for example, trying to explain the Boston tea party to Jim, says,

> "All of a sudden Henry 8 heaves all the tea in Boston Harbor overboard, and whacks out a declaration of independence and dares them to come on."[2]

In India, students were quizzed about the Yankee colonists. Twain records a few of their answers:

> "Captain John Smith has been styled the father of his country. His life was saved by his daughter Pochahantas."[3]

> "The Puritans found an insane asylum in the wilds of America."[4]

Mark, even to New Englanders he liked, made acidly humorous remarks:

> "Those Pilgrims were a hard lot. --They abolished everybody else's ancestors. What do you want to celebrate them for?"[5]

1. Mark Twain: Christian Science, p. 70.
2. Mark Twain: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 213.
3. Mark Twain: Following The Equator, p. 607.
4. Ibid, p. 607.
5. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.19.

The Yankee, for all his boasting, had not learned to speak the American language correctly:

> "One cannot hear Yankee dialect outside of the little corner called New England. The English themselves planted it there, two hundred and fifty years ago, and there it remains; it has never spread. -- Up to as late as 1847, Mr. Webster's dictionary had the impudence to still pronounce 'basket' bahsket when he knew that outside of his little New England all America shortened the 'a'."[1]

And he certainly had no reason to be vain of his cooking:

> "RECIPE FOR NEW ENGLAND PIE: To make this excellent breakfast dish, proceed as follows: Take a sufficiency of water and a sufficiency of flour and construct a bullet-proof dough. Work this into the form of a disk, with the edges turned up some three-fourths of an inch. Toughen and kiln-dry it a couple of days in a mild but unvarying temperature. Construct a cover for this redoubt in the same way and of the same material. Fill with stewed dried apple; aggravate with cloves, lemon peel, and slabs of citron; add two portions of New Orleans sugar, then solder on the lid and set in a safe place till it petrifies. Serve cold at breakfast and invite your enemy."[2]

> "Corn bread -- hot biscuits -- wheat bread -- fried chicken -- these things have never been properly cooked in the North -- in fact, nc one there is able to learn the art, so far as my experience goes."[3]

Yankee Victorianism offered another target. Mark lived in those dear old days when "books, journals and pictures must

1. Mark Twain: Tom Sawyer Abroad And Other Stories, p. 408.
2. Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Vol. 2, p. 265.
3. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 97.

be suited to a Kensington drawing-room or a Boston boarding house."[1] Against the genteel and moral traditions, wherever he found them, Mark reacted strongly. To a correspondent who signed his letter 'Moral Statistician,' Clemens replied, "I don't want any of your statistics; I took your whole batch and lit my pipe with it. I hate your kind of people."[2]

They were certainly "that kind of people" up in Concord:

> "When Huck appeared, twenty-one years ago, the public library of Concord, Massachusetts, flung him out indignantly, partly because he was a liar and partly because after deep meditation, and careful deliberation, he made up his mind on a difficult point, and said that if he'd got to betray Jim or go to hell, he would go to hell -- which was profanity, and those Concord purists couldn't stand it."[3]

Sometimes he dared the New England reader to proceed at his own risk:

> "The inquiry is from a professor in a New England university. It contains only one naughty word (what in hell) which I cannot bear to suppress, but he is not in the theological department, so it is no harm."[4]

In What Is Man, Clemens traced the divergent paths of twins who started out in life on equal footing -- boys of "good disposition, fleckless morals -- models of the Sunday school."[5] Significantly, Mark made them New Englanders. He

1. Leacock, Stephen: Mark Twain, p. 63.
2. Mark Twain: Sketches New And Old, p. 81.
3. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 333.
4. Mark Twain: The $30,000 Bequest, p. 469.
5. Mark Twain: What Is Man, p. 61.

did not single out New England for all his Victorian commentary, by any means, but he got in enough good licks at his adopted region to show that he had it very much in mind.

The men and women around him in New England tried to Victorianize his writing. The ones he loved best, tried the hardest. Olivia Clemens, objecting to words like "stench," drew from her husband the protest, "You are steadily weakening the English language, Livy."[1] Howells amputated Mark's cuss words. The world is indebted, indeed, to Olivia and Howells for eliminating passages that were in really poor taste, and for helping the discursive Mark to organize his work. But Howells, though he was the father of American realism, clung to "a morbid horror of the sordid and ugly, of the seamy side of life."[2] He wrote for a feminized public, and would have polished Mark Twain to the point of damage, if Mark had allowed him.

Clemens lashed out, also, at that by-product of Victorianism, New England romantic trash. He wrote a travesty of it[3] and expressed his distaste even for Hawthorne, Poe, and a number of the recognized Romantics, in or out of New England:

> "Dear Howells: I have to write a line,
> lazy as I am, to say how your Poe article
> delighted me; and to say that I am in

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 1040.
2. Brooks, Van Wyck: New England Indian Summer, p. 213.
3. Mark Twain: The Loves Of Alonzo Fitz Clarence And Rosannah Ethelton, from Tom Sawyer Abroad And Other Stories.

> agreement with substantially all you say about his literature. To me his prose is unreadable -- like Jane Austin's. No, there is a difference. I could read his prose on salary, but not Jane's. Jane is entirely impossible. It seems a great pity that they allowed her to die a natural death."[1]

But he did not press the attack hard upon New England letters. Aldrich he considered the most brilliant man alive. Longfellow, Emerson, and Whittier he continued to revere, despite the ignominy he had suffered in their presence. Holmes, was the Brahmin of the Brahmins, but Clemens admired his work as much as he did the man. The friendship began when Mark unwittingly used some lines of Holmes for the dedication to Innocents Abroad. Mark says that when a friend called his attention to the plagiary,

> "--my first impulse was to prepare this man's remains for burial, but upon reflection I said I would reprieve him for a moment or two, and give him a chance to prove his assertion if he could. We stepped into a book-store and he did prove it. I had stolen that dedication almost word for word. --Some years before I had read and reread Dr. Holmes' poems until my mental reservoir was filled with them to the brim. -- I wrote to Dr. Holmes -- and he salved over my sore spot so gently and so healingly, that I was rather glad I had committed the crime, for the sake of the letter. (He was) the first great man who ever wrote me a letter."[2]

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.830.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 659.

Later, Clemens adds,

> "I have lost his answer. I could better have afforded to lose an uncle."[1]

> "I told him you and I used the Autocrat as a courtingbook and marked it all through, and that you keep it in the sacred green box with the love letters, and it pleased him."[2]

He could respect the classic and romantic flowering of New England, but he himself preferred to move along the path blazed by Howells -- realism. "You are really my only author," he wrote Howells, "I wouldn't give a damn for the rest (of the new writers)."[3] As each new book of Howells' came from the press, Mark paid tribute:

> "It is a beautiful story and makes a body laugh all the time, and cry inside, and feel so old and so forlorn; and it gives him gracious glimpses of his lost youth that fill him with a measureless regret. -- You have done it with marvelous facility and you make all the motives and feelings perfectly clear without analyzing the guts out of them, the way George Eliot does. I can't stand George Eliot and Hawthorne and those people; I see what they are at a hundred years before they get to it, and they just tire me to death. And as for "The Bostonians," I would rather be damned to John Bunyan's heaven than read that."[4]

Defining realism as "the truthful treatment of material," Howells had said he hoped the time was coming when "each new

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 241.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 603.
3. Ibid, p. 454.
4. Ibid, p. 455.

artist will be considered, not in his proportion to any other author or artist, but in his relation to the human nature, known to us all."[1] This, of course, was Mark's own position. Clemens himself might have written some of Howells' lines:

> "The common average man has the standard of the arts in his power. -- The people who have been brought up on the heroic grasshopper, the impassioned grasshopper, the self-devoted, adventureful, good old romantic card-board grasshopper, must die out before the simple, honest, and natural grasshopper can have a fair field."[2]

As more and more of Mark Twain was printed in the Atlantic, as louder and louder came the songs of praise from overseas, and as with ever-increasing warmth Howells editorialized on Mark Twain's place in American literature, the strain between Clemens and Boston began to ease. Clemens, before the Whittier Speech, had said of Boston's Atlantic, "It is the only audience that I sit down before in perfect serenity, for the simple reason that it doesn't require a 'humorist' to paint himself striped and stand on his head every fifteen minutes."[3]

The oldtime serenity began to return. In the cordiality of his speeches, in his warming to gracious Yankee toasts, and in his continued habit of using New England to drive

1. American Poetry and Prose, Edited by Norman Foerster, p. 987. Howells, William Dean: (Criticism and Fiction.)
2. Ibid, p. 987.
3. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 236.

home a comparison, one observes, again, a Mark Twain striving to win the interest and affection of his neighbors.

> "Victoria is just eighty times as large as the State of Rhode Island.-- Outside of Melbourne, Victoria seems to be owned by a handful of squatters, each with a Rhode Island for a sheep farm."[1]

> "A fairly straight line 700 miles long, drawn westward from Sydney, would strike Broken Hill, just as a somewhat shorter one drawn west from Boston would strike Buffalo."[2]

> "The little kingdom of Oude was about as big as the State of Maine."[3]

> "Clouds of dust blowing along the powerful wind, like snow in New England on a raw March morning."[4]

> "The good honest dirt was so thickly caked over (the Mississippi steamboat) that she was righteously taxable as real estate. There are places in New England where her hurricane deck would be worth a hundred and fifty dollars an acre."[5]

Frequently he consulted with Warner, Howells, and Twichell, laid his ideas before them, and, by their response, knew which of his literary projects would strike the Yankee taste. The success of Aldrich's Story Of A Bad Boy, for example, led Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn into Boston. Again, Life On The Mississippi was Mark's own invention, of course,

1. Mark Twain: Following The Equator, p. 151.
2. Ibid, p. 172.
3. Ibid, p. 444.
4. Mark Twain's Notebook: Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 302.
5. Mark Twain: Life On The Mississippi, p. 172.

but the flame of inspiration was kindled by Howells and Twichell, who would not let him rest until he had set forth his river-piloting adventures for the astonishment of the East.

New England's final judgment of Mark Twain was unreservedly favorable. Barring Van Wyck Brooks and the frosty but silent Cambridgians of Clemens' day, it is hard to find a dissenting vote. Longfellow, Emerson, and Whittier were puzzled by Clemens, but they were ever kindly. Holmes championed him. Lowell called his Jumping Frog story "the finest piece of humorous writing yet produced in America."[1]

Howells, standing head and shoulders above all other late-century critics, unhesitatingly declared,

> "Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes -- I knew them all, and all the rest of our sages, poets, seers, critics, humorists; but Clemens was sole, incomparable, the Lincoln of our literature."[2]

Moving down to modern times, we find Bernard De Voto in complete accord with the "Lincoln" hypothesis, and hear Robert Frost proclaiming, "Mark Twain and Emerson have been the two greatest influences thus far exerted to make Americans what they are."[3]

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 321.
2. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 101.
3. Clemens, Cyril: A Chat With Robert Frost, Mark Twain Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 4, Spring, 1940, p. 16.

These men did not measure Mark Twain by his indiscretions, his business life, or his confessed inability to understand a number of sacrosancts -- including God, the Italian masters, and Wagner. They saw magnificence in him despite these admissions. Mark Twain, by his very defiance of the conventional, was not unlike Emerson. Certainly he was using Emersonian "inner light" and "self reliance" when he exposed the tarnished side of classic idols -- writing of the Grand Duomo of Florence:

> "I fell down and worshiped -- but when the filthy beggars swarmed around me, the contrast was too striking. -- I said, 'oh, sons of classic Italy, is the spirit of enterprise, of self-reliance, of noble endeavor, utterly dead within ye?'"[1]

and of St. Mark's:

> "It looks like a vast warty bug taking a meditative walk."[2]

No, these men were not concerned. They knew that whatever Mark Twain's motives, his ignorances, or his admissions, he was no mere "business man's writer." He had, at one time or another, reached the hearts of nearly every man, woman, and child in the country. He had created something these eminents elected to call art -- and if anyone chose to define art differently, they, particularly De Voto,

1. Mark Twain: The Innocents Abroad, Vol. 1, p. 266.
2. Mark Twain: A Tramp Abroad, Vol. 2, p. 255.

were not troubled by the metaphysical distinction.

Mark's triumph in New England can be summed up in the paradox of his early, so-called "defeat" at Boston. All too often, critics who write that the province looked at him askance and received him as a savage, assume that the super-clever literary circles spoke for the entire town. Actually, these esoterics were but a small minority in Clemens' Boston audience. Worse than that, they were technically dead. They spoke for a Boston that was no more, a Boston whose glory had passed and who had not caught up with the change in critical standards and with the fact of her own literary decease, although she did continue to bludgeon the rest of the country into submission "by default," as Van Wyck Brooks says.[1]

Excepting Howells and a very few others of genuine stature, the only group qualified to speak for real Boston, for changing Boston, were the common people -- and just listen to them!

> "The winter that the Bill Nye and James Whitcomb Riley entertainment combination set out on their travels, Mark Twain introduced them to their first Boston audience. Mark's presence was a surprise to the audience, and when they recognized him the demonstration was tremendous. The audience rose in a body, and men and women shouted at the very top of their voices. Handkerchiefs waved, the organist even opened every forte key and pedal in the great organ,

1. Brooks, Van Wyck: The Ordeal of Mark Twain, p. 68.

> and the noise went on unabated for minutes. It took some time for the crowd to get down to listening, but when they did subside, as Mark stepped to the front, the silence was as impressive as the noise had been."[1]

One cannot write that reception off as mere mass hysteria. It happened too often. The artistry that inspired it was confirmed by the sober Howells. Nor can the people's judgment be dismissed on grounds of ignorance or critical incompetence. So long as art and literature remain democratic, so long as Twain's own principle of art for everybody's sake has any validity, so long as common humanity and not a select group are at the other end of the artist's wire, the vote of the many must be given equal weight with that of the enlightened few.

In the popular but profoundly truer meaning, Boston, and all New England, had never ceased to exalt Mark Twain.

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 876.

## V THE INNOCENT AT HOME

"Hartford is the place where the insurance companies all live. I think it must be the handsomest city in the Union, in summer. Many of the inhabitants have retired from business, but the others labor along in the old customary way, as presidents of insurance companies" -- Mark Twain Quarterly[1]

1. Fall-Winter, '40-'41, Vol. 2, p. 13.

## V THE INNOCENT AT HOME

The silhouette of Mark Twain upon New England is becoming more distinct. Having viewed him as business man extraordinary, critical friend of Yankee people, lover of New England physical beauty, and lion of New England letters, we are now better prepared to meet Clemens in his own home.

To get as close as possible to the man of flesh and blood, to see him, at first hand, reacting to his New England community, is the pleasant venture which we have deliberately saved until last, knowing that it would prove to be most revealing and most delightful.

The key that opens the door into the Farmington Avenue home is the anecdote -- that type of story about Citizen Twain that has been told and retold without losing its edge. He who has read every anecdote never tires of reading again, and he who has not -- let him pour himself a drink and prepare to rejoice. For we are going to talk with the Clemens household itself -- with the faithful housekeeper, Katie Leary, in her Lifetime With Mark Twain, with Clara Clemens, in My Father Mark Twain, with Mark himself, who had some rather insouciant ideas about his own family and neighborhood, in his Autobiography and Notebook -- with Howells, Cyril Clemens, and others who were right on the scene.

When we leave the house later, it will be with a knowledge of the deeper meaning in Mark's casual remark, "I am a Connecticut Yankee by adoption."[1]

The house was unlike any other ever built. People asked him why he built the kitchen toward the street, for example, and he replied, "My cook is big and fat, and when she wants to see the circus go by, she can simply look out of the kitchen window, and not shake us all to death by running to a front window."[2] The kitchen, however, was by no means unattractive, nor the general design.

The main entrance was at right angles to the street. One passed through it into a large foyer, to a parlor with a grand piano, and to the dining room, thence left into an ample library and on to a semi-circular conservatory, of a style designed by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Appropriately, a plate of brass with the inscription "The ornament of a house is the friends that frequent it," graced the library fireplace. On the ground floor, also, was the mahogany room, where Susy died, and a large bedroom.

Upstairs were more large bedrooms, many baths, and an abundance of Oriental effects -- paintings, statuary, draperies. To the children, the very air here breathed mystery and

1. Mark Twain's Speeches, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 19.
2. Clemens, Cyril: My Cousin Mark Twain, p. 88.

charm:

> "There was something romantic, even dramatic, about the atmosphere of this home of ours in Hartford. It was a brick building with many little turrets, porches, and towers. Three floors of various-shaped rooms provided suitable scenes for almost any novel or drama one might be reading. There was a guest-room on the third floor next father's study and billiard-room. This room was so spooky that my sisters and I decided it was a suitable home for the insane wife of Rochester, in Jane Eyre. On this floor, too, in a small gabled room where I kept some rather wild squirrels, we imprisoned a sea pirate to whom we passed meager food through a gridiron nailed on the door until the cook instituted a thorough search for the missing utensil, which was required for the cooking of chops. After this, the pirate was allowed to die."[1]

Clemens' favorite was the billiard room. From it, from the library and conservatory windows, and from a number of "surprise" balconies, he could look out across a valley and little stream, and almost touch the foliage of the beautiful beeches embracing that side of the house.

The general architecture was radically different from the traditional, box-like Hartford homes of that period. The Clemenses had been as delighted as little children over the planning and building of their unique structure, and had imbued it with their spirit. One interesting but unobtrusive touch was the arrangement of certain curving lines to resemble those of a steamboat!

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 3.

Mark was pleased with the Hartford location because it was almost equally distant from Boston and New York. He could pounce upon his friends in either city and thoroughly disorganize them, to their infinite delight. Howells and Josh Billings testify:

> "Your visit was a perfect ovation for us; we never enjoy anything so much as those visits of yours. The smoke and the Scotch and the late hours almost kill us; but we look each other in the eyes when you are gone, and say what a glorious time it was, and air the library, and begin sleeping and longing to have you back again."[1]

> "Yure good wife has put her good house in apple-pie order for the ockashun; everything is just in the right place. Yu don't smoke in yure house, never. Yu don't put yure feet on the center table, yu don't scatter the nuzepapers all over the room, in utter confushion; order and ekonemy governs your premises. But if you expect Mark Twain to be happy, or even kumfortable, yu have got to buy a box of cigars worth at least seventeen dollars and yu have to move all the tender things out of your parlor. Yu have got to skatter all the latest papers around the room careless, you have got to hav a picture ov ice water handy, for Mark is a dry humorist. Yu have got to ketch and tie all yure yung ones, hed and foot, for Mark luvs babys only in theory; yu have got to send your favorite kat over to the nabors and hide your poodle."[2]

Of the two cities, Howells says, Mark preferred coming to Boston.[3] "All men in New York insult you," said Mark, "there

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 576.
2. Ibid, p. 446.
3. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 50.

seems to be no exceptions. There are exceptions, of course -- have been -- but they are probably dead. I am speaking of all persons there who are clothed in a little brief authority."[1]

The neighbors? They were chiefly the Warners, the Stowes, and the Twichells. Towards these people and other Hartforders, Mark Twain behaved with delicious, shirt-sleeve informality. Katie Leary often heard him ribbing Warner about his poor penmanship, "Where in hell did you learn to write, Charley?"[2] Twichell, says Mark, was always coming over to "swap lies." And as for Harriet Beecher Stowe:

> "Mrs. Stowe was leaving for Florida one morning, and Clemens ran over early to say good-by. On his return, Mrs. Clemens regarded him disapprovingly: 'Why, Youth,' she said, 'you haven't on any collar and tie.' He said nothing, but went up to his room, did up these items in a neat package, and sent it over by a servant, with a line: 'Herewith receive a call from the rest of me.'"[3]

Sometimes the Hartforders turned the tables on Mark:

> "One day he tried to call up Mrs. Dr. Tafft. He could not hear plainly and thought he was talking to central. 'Send down and take this d--- thing out of here,' he said, 'I'm tired of it.' He was mad, and using a good deal of bad language. All at once he heard Mrs. Dr. Tafft say, 'Oh, Mr. Clemens, good morning.' He said,

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 185.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 92.
3. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 566.

> 'Why, Mrs. Tafft, I have just come to the telephone. George, our butler, was here before me and I heard him swearing as I came up. I shall have to talk to him about it.' Mrs. Tafft often told it on him."[1]

Clemens loved to entertain, and urged Aldrich and Howells, especially, to visit him more often, or to buy a house near him in Hartford. "Mr. Hall, who lives in the house next to Mrs. Stowe's will sell for $16,000 or $17,000. You can do your work just as well here as in Cambridge, can't you? Come! Will one of you boys buy that house? Now, say yes."[2] To Howells, Clemens would write inducing letter promising him the run of the house, and rest and solitude enforced by locked doors. Mark said that would "fix all of the lot except Twichell, who will no more hesitate to climb in the back window than nothing."[3] Needless to say the locked doors never materialized:

> "The Howells and Clemens families began visiting back and forth between Boston and Hartford, and sometimes Aldrich came, though less frequently, and the gatherings at the homes of Warner and Clemens were full of never-to-be-forgotten happiness. Of one such visit, Howells wrote: 'In the good fellowship of that coridal neighborhood we had two such days as the aging sun no longer shines on in his round. There was constant running in and out of friendly houses, where the lively hosts

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 838.
2. Ibid, p. 503.
3. Ibid, p. 503.

> and guests called one another by their christian names or nicknames, and no such vain ceremony as knocking or ringing at doors.'"[1]

Katie Leary declares, "Why, it wouldn't be a real dinner excepting Mr. and Mrs. Warner was there," and "Mr. Howells was there about as much as anybody, though he lived in Boston. He had charge of some little magazine -- I think it was called the Atlantic Monthly -- and it's still going. He was a nice-looking man, too, and one of the very pleasantest men that ever lived. You could hear them for miles around, they talked and laughed so much when they was together. -- One of those real jolly men, smiling all the time, no matter what happened."[2]

Howells brought along his son John, aged six, on one occasion, promising the lad he would see a "palace." The boy, who had been reading tales of Aladdin, was suitably impressed, and his eager eyes translated the home into magnificent Arabian surroundings. "Look, daddy, they have the soap painted," he said of a pink cake in the bathroom. When he saw George, the colored butler, he retreated hastily to his father and whispered,"Come quick, the slave is setting the table."[3]

Even for adults, entering the Clemens' house was like

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 216.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 92.
3. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 573.

peeking back stage. There were alway theatrics, always a surprise. "Once I remember seeing him come into his drawing room at Hartford in a pair of white cowskin slippers with the hair out, and do a crippled colored uncle, to the joy of all beholders. I must not say all, for I remember also the dismay of Mrs. Clemens, and her low despairing cry of 'Oh, Youth.'"[1]

"Clemens was the best kind of host," said George Warner, "his evenings after dinner were an unending flow of stories. The Clemens house was the only one I have ever known where there was never any preoccupation in the evenings, and where visitors were always welcome."[2]

A son of the Reverend Joe Twichell could remember that "unending flow" even as late as 1945. He says that he and other children rarely understood the conversation, but they would sit stone still at table, fascinated, highly entertained, while Uncle Mark strode up and down the room disserting and waving his arms, passing the ball occasionally to Uncle Joe or Howells.

Howells confirms this, saying that "Breakfast was Clemens' best meal, and he sat longer at his steak and coffee than at the courses of his dinner -- and reserved the later

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 5.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 476.

repast as the occasion of walking up and down the room, and discoursing at large on anything that came into his head. Like most good talkers, he liked other people to have their say; he did not talk them down -- We sat up late, he smoking the last of his innumerable cigars and soothing his tense nerves with a mild Scotch, while we both talked, and talked, of everything in the heavens and on the earth, and the waters under the earth. After two days of this talk, I would come away hollow."[1]

Mrs. Clemens, somewhat embarrassed when her husband's orating sent him wandering away from the guests at dinner table, would say, "Oh Youth, do come and sit down with us. We can listen so much better."[2] Generally he went right on with the act. Twichell's son also recalls that Mark played host and entertainer at others' houses. One morning he came down to the Twichell breakfast table, spilled something, exclaimed, "Oh, darn it, Harmony, I've made a mess!" and atoned by orating in Mrs. Twichell's kitchen while she did the dishes. He paced from wall to wall speculating on what he imagined to be the facial expressions of various animals in the bacterial kingdom, while Harmony gasped "Mark, you're absurd!"

Sooner or later, Mark lured most of his guests up to the billiard room. "It was pretty cold up there in the early spring and late fall," reports Howells, "but by lighting up

1. Howells: William Dean: My Mark Twain, pp. 38,9.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 574.

all the gas burners and kindling a reluctant fire on the hearth, we could keep it well above freezing."[1] Mark loved to invent new rules that would advantage him on his very next shot, and to feign indignation when his friends overruled him. With Henry C. Robinson, Ned Bunce, and F. G. Whitmore, he formed a "Friday Evening Club," and the boys went at it with all the industry and zest of a poker session. Mark never wearied. Long after he had played his friends into exhaustion, he would go on slamming the balls around by himself. His absorption in the game was at times a trifle alarming:

> "One day when I went in," says Katie Leary, "I noticed smoke coming up from the hearth. I called Patrick and John O'Neill, the gardener, and we began taking up the hearth to see what was the matter. Mr. Clemens kept right on playing billiards right along and paid no attention to what we were doing. Finally, when we got the hearth up, a lot of flame and smoke came out into the room. The house was on fire. Mr. Clemens noticed then what we were about, and went over to the corner where there were some bottle fire-extinguishers. He took one down and threw it into the flames. This put them out a good deal, and he took up his cue, went back to the table, and began to shoot the balls around again as if nothing had happened. Mrs. Clemens came in just then and said, 'Why the house is afire!' 'Yes, I know it,' he said, but went on playing."[2]

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 14.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 838.

Mark's wife was described by Howells as "the loveliest person I have ever seen -- the gentlest, the kindest, without a touch of weakness; she united wonderful tact with wonderful truth; and Clemens not only accepted her rule implicitly, but he rejoiced, he gloried in it."[1]

Mark wrote love letters to Olivia until the end of her life, and addressed her with such meaningful endearments that a workman who overheard them left the Clemens' house shaking his head and refusing to believe such a couple could exist.

But Mark also delighted in the ludicrous. To his guests and friends, he pretended there were terrible depths of venom and danger in his gentle spouse, and that the crockery would fly every time he contradicted her. Nonsense aside, if anyone could govern the ungovernable Mark in his relations with the Yankees, it was she. Lovingly, she enforced her wifely dictates, Mark rebelling but feebly at home, but strenuously and humorously in his letters:

> "You and Aldrich have made one woman deeply and sincerely grateful. For months -- I may even say years -- she has shown an unaccountable animosity toward my necktie. (the old-fashioned Western "black string"), even getting up in the night to take it with the tongs and blackguard it, sometimes also going so far as to threaten it. When I said you and Aldrich had given me two new neckties, and that they were in a paper in my overcoat pocket, she was in a fever of happiness until she found I was going to frame them; then all the

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 10.

venom in her nature gathered itself together, insomuch that I, being near to a door, went without, perceiving danger."[1]

"Mrs. Clemens received the mail this morning, and the next minute she lit into the study with danger in her eye and this demand on her tongue, 'Where is the profanity Mr. Howells speaks of?' Then I had to miserably confess that I had left it out when reading the MS. to her. Nothing but inspired lying got me out of this scrape with my scalp. Does your wife give you rats like that, when you go a little one-sided?"[2]

"I 'caught it' for letting Mrs. Howells bother and bother about her coffee, when it was a 'good deal better than we get at home.' I 'caught it' for interrupting Mrs. C. at the last moment and losing her the opportunity to urge you not to forget to send her that MS when the printers are done with it. I 'caught it' once more for personating that drunken Colonel James. I'caught it' for mentioning that Mrs. Longfellow's picture was slightly damaged; and when, after a lull in the storm,I confessed shamefacedly that I had privately suggested to you that we hadn't any frames, and that if you wouldn't mind hinting to Mrs. Houghton etc. etc. etc.,the madam was simply speechless for the space of a minute. Then she said: 'How could you, Youth! The idea of sending Mr. Howells, with his sensitive nature upon such a repulsive er --' 'Oh, Howells won't mind it! You don't know Howells. Howells is a man who --' She was gone. But George was the first person she stumbled on in the hall, so she took it out of George. I am glad of that, because it saved the babies."[3]

Once when he was swearing merrily in the bathroom, un-

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine,p.241.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 549.
3. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine,p.265.

aware that the door was open and that Mrs. Clemens could hear him, he discovered the fatal error too late, tried to sneak quietly into bed, only to find her sitting up, repeating his words,

> "--- regarding him with a look as withering as she could find in her gentle soul. The humor of it struck him. 'Livy,' he said, 'did it sound like that?' 'Of course, it did,' she said, 'only worse. I wanted you to hear just how it sounded.' 'Livy,' he said, ' it would pain me to think that when I swear it sounds like that. You got the words right, Livy, but you don't know the tune.'"1

When Clemens went to Washington to be presented to the beautiful wife of President Cleveland, Olivia wrote something on a card, and gave it to him as a reminder. On his way to the reception, Mark pulled out the card and read: "Don't wear your arctics in the White House." Later, the card was mailed back to Olivia at Hartford, and on it Mark had obtained Francis Cleveland's signature and the words, "He didn't!"2

> "(Dear Mrs. Cleveland)--I suppose the President often acts like that; goes and makes an impossible promise, and you never find it out until it is next to impossible to break it and set things straight again. Well, that is just our way exactly -- one-half the administration always busy getting the family into trouble and the other half busy getting it out."3

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 559
2. Ibid, p. 865.
3. Ibid, p. 865.

Evidence that Olivia Clemens had captured Hartford, and that she was a considerable factor in Mark's social life in New England, comes from Clemens himself. One summer when the family was staying at Elmira, Mark went back to Hartford on a brief errand, and wrote his wife from there:

> "The welcomes were so cordial and so eloquent that I was seldom able to say a word in response. Mainly the reason was, that to those people I stood for you. I was lately come from you, the hand they shook had lately touched yours. I myself was effaced and counted for little, and was proud of it and happy in it. In your whole life you have never known any woman who is so loved and honored as Hartford loves and honors you."[1]

Mark Twain "swore like an angel," according to Katie Leary. "Sort of amusing it was -- and gay -- a part of him, somehow."[2] One time when Clemens tripped over something in the dark and began fuming, his wife admonished him to come to bed when he was through "praying." No home or community without ample justifications for "prayer" would have suited him; he would have found it colorless and boring. But Hartford seems to have kept him happy in this department, providing just enough objectionables to keep his vocabulary in trim. In Hartford there was always some hideous "crime" upon which to dash his spleen; he could curse at her taxes, and threaten to cancel his citizenship -- but he never did, just because there was so much satisfaction in abusing the old girl:

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 73.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 100.

> "I found yesterday that a prominent citizen (who has two skunk friends on the Street Board) had at last succeeded in getting the light moved from the Gillette Street Corner to the mouth of Forest Street, thus leaving cur gates smothered in Egyptian darkness. The city has done me many a mean trick, in sixteen years, and I stood the strain and kept the peace; but to frightfully inconvenience me to accomodate a person like the said citizen was too much. So I went down last night and contracted for electric light at my own cost, and police protection at my own cost, and took measures to transfer my citizenship to some other town. So after next June, I shall have the satisfaction of paying a possibly very large tax every year to some town in which I do not live, and paying not a cent to Hartford any more forever."[1]

Then there was that volcanic letter to the Hartford gas company, cited earlier, about shutting off the Goddamned Gas without letting the Goddamned Parishioners know about it. But the company was not let off this easily. In still another letter to it, Mark adds:

> "For fifteen years, in spite of my prayers and tears, you persistently kept a gas lamp exactly half way between my gates, so that I couldn't find either of them after dark; and then furnished such execrable gas that I had to hang a danger sign on the lamp post to keep teams from running into it nights. Please take your light and go to -- but never mind, it is not for me to suggest; you will probably find the way; and anyway, you can reasonably count for divine assistance if you lose your bearings. S.L. Clemens"

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 203.
2. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p.471

Gentlemen of rugged and humorous speech can be the "plague" of parsons. Mark Twain, with his own inimitable techniques of prayer, and his respect for the churchman's crusade against human sufferings, sought out the Hartford clergy. He was but continuing a habit he began in earlier days when he wrote his mother: "I am as thick as thieves with the Reverend Stebbins. I am laying for the Reverend Scudder and the Reverend Doctor Stone. I am running on preachers now altogether, and I find them gay."[1]

The first day that he stepped inside the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Mark, noting the prosperity of the members, observed in a loud voice that this was the "Church of the Holy Speculators," and then turned to meet its pastor, who was standing, by chance, right behind him. The forty-year friendship began then and there.

Twitting Twichell became his specialty. The great admiration and love between these men and their families only added to Clemens' zest for teasing and caricaturing his friend at every turn:

> "Joe Twichell could get together the most impossible Christians that ever assembled in anybody's congregation, and as a usual thing he couldn't run his church systematically on account of new deacons who didn't understand the business -- the recent deacons having joined their pre-

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow, Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 372.

decessors in the penitentiary down there at Wethersfield."[1]

"Twichell has had many adventures. He has more adventures in a year than anybody else has in five. One Saturday night he noticed a bottle on his wife's dressing bureau. He thought the label said 'Hair Restorer' and he took it in his room and gave his head a good drenching and sousing with it and carried it back and thought no more of it. Next morning when he got up his head was a bright green. He couldn't get a substitute preacher. He hadn't a sermon in his barrel, as it happened, of any lightsome character. The gravity of the sermon did not harmonize with the gayety of his head, and the people sat all through it with handkerchiefs stuffed in their mouths-- any way to keep down their joy. And Twichell told me that he was sure he never had seen his congregation -- the entire body of his congregation -- absorbed in interest in his sermon, from beginning to end, before. -- And he said that when he came down out of the pulpit more people waited to shake him by the hand and tell him what a good sermon it was, than ever before. -- The days went on and Sunday followed Sunday, the interest in Twichell's hair grew and grew; because it didn't stay green. It took on deeper and deeper shades of green; and then it would change and become reddish, and would go from that to some other color;but it was never a solid color. It was always mottled. And each Sunday it was a little more interesting than it was the Sunday before -- and Twichell's head became famous. -- And it was a good thing in several ways, because the business had been languishing. Now a lot of people joined the church so that they could have the show, and it was the beginning of a prosperity for that church which has never diminished in all these years."[2]

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine Vol. 1, p. 302.
2. Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 342.

"(Decoration Day) Twichell was orator. He pelted his great crowd of old Civil War soldiers for an hour in the biggest church in Hartford, while they mourned and sweltered. Then they marched forth and joined the procession of other old soldiers and tramped through clouds of dust to the cemetery and began to distribute the flags and the flowers. --- This industry went on and on and on, everybody breathing dust -- for there was nothing else to breathe; everybody streaming with perspiration; everybody tired and wishing it was over. -- The crowd massed themselves together around Twichell with uncovered heads, the silence and solemnity interrupted only by subdued sneezings. -- After a pause, Twichell began an impressive prayer, making it brief to meet the exigencies of the occasion. In the middle of it he made a pause. The drummer thought he was through, and let fly a rub-a-dub-dub -- and the little major stormed out, 'Stop that drum!' Twichell tried again. He got almost to the last word safely, when somebody trod on a dog and the dog let out a howl of anguish that could be heard beyond the frontier. The major said 'God damn that dog!' and Twichell said, 'Amen.'"[1]

"You know how absent minded Twichell is and how desolate his face is when he is in that frame. At such times he passes the word with a friend on the street and is not aware of the meeting at all. Twice in a week our Clara (aged 15) had this latter experience with him within the past month. But the second instance was too much for her and she woke him up, in his tracks, with a reproach -- she said, 'Uncle Joe, why do you always look as if you were just going down into the grave, when you meet a person on the street?' -- Well, she has met Twichell three times since then, and would swim the Connecticut River to avoid meeting him the fourth. As soon as he sights her, no matter how publicly placed, nor how far off she is,

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 210.

> he makes a bound into the air, hurls arms and legs into all sorts of frantic gestures of delight, and so comes prancing, skipping, and pirouetting for her like a drunken Indian entering heaven. She feels as embarrassed as the Almighty."[1]

Then there was the time Clemens thought there was a burglar on his premises. It turned out to be a surreptitious visitor to one of his housemaids. The young gentleman was honest and honorable enough, but seemed reluctant to marry the maid whom he declared to be his fiancee. Without the young man knowing it, Clemens summoned Twichell, concealed him in the ground floor bathroom (and it was a sweltering August night!) Then Clemens went into a "father with shotgun" act. He threatened to have the poor fellow hauled into court unless he made good his vows. The young man was stubborn -- it required a little time, 2 hours in fact! -- but at last Clemens prevailed, and threw open the bathroom door, dramatically. Out came the dripping, red-faced Twichell -- disposed for almost any text but the one called for. But the minister managed to recover his equanimity, married the couple on the spot, and they lived happily in the proverbial thereafter -- according to Mr. Paine.[2]

Joe and Mark used to walk often to Talcott's Tower, some five miles distant from Hartford, conversing all the way there and back on "philosophies and religions and creeds and all the

1. Mark Twain's Notebook, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 208.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 601.

range of human possibility and shortcoming, and all the phases of literature and history and politics," says Mr. Paine.[1] That would seem to cover just about everything! Once they set out to walk from Hartford to Boston, following the old Boston stage road. Arriving at Westford on the first night, twenty-eight miles from the starting point, they stayed at the only lodging place available in town, a tavern. The hosteler and an inebriate entertained the minister-incognito with some rather fancy language and recommendations. The next day, lame and sore, they finished the walking trip by rail, and were received and feted by Clemens' friends in Boston. Mark, "with his head thrown back, and in his hand a dish of those escalloped oysters without which no party in Cambridge was really a party,"[2] amused the guests with the tale of Twichell's discomfiture.

Clemens' relations with the Hartford citizenry are beautifully epitomized in this long letter to Howells:

"Well, here is our romance. It happened in this way. One morning, a month ago -- no, three weeks -- Livy, and Clara Spalding and I were at breakfast, at 10 A.M., and I was in an irritable mood, for the barber was up stairs waiting and his hot water getting cold, when the colored George returned from answering the bell and said: 'There's a lady in the drawing room wants to see you.' 'A book agent!' says I, with heat. 'I won't see her; I will die in my tracks, first.'

"Then I got up with a soul full of rage, and went in there and bent scowling over the person, and began a succession of rude and raspy questions -- and without even offering to sit down.

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 527.
2. Howells, William Dean, My Mark Twain, p. 45.

"Not even the defendant's youth and beauty and (seeming) timidity were able to modify my savagery, for a time -- and meantime question and answer were going on. She had risen to her feet with the first question; and there she stood, with her pretty face bent floorward whilst I enquired, but always with her honest eyes looking me in the face when it came her turn to answer.

"And this was her tale, and her plea -- diffidently stated, but straightforwardly; and bravely, and most winningly, simply, and earnestly: I put it in my own fashion for I do not remember her words:

"Mr. Karl Gerhardt, who works in Pratt and Whitney's machine shops, has made a statue in clay, and would I be so kind as to come and look at it, and tell him if there is any promise in it? He has none to go to, and he would be so glad.

" 'Oh, dear me,' I said. 'I don't know anything about art -- there's nothing I can tell him.'

"But she went on, just as earnestly and as simply as before, with her plea -- and so she did after repeated rebuffs; and dull as I am, even I began by and by to admire this brave and gentle persistence, and to perceive how her heart of hearts was in this thing, and how she couldn't give it up, but must carry her point. So at least I wavered and promised in general terms that I would come down the first day that fell idle -- and as I conducted her to the door, I tamed more and more, and said I would come during the very next week -- 'We shall be so glad -- but -- but, would you please come early in the week? -- the statue is just finished and we are so anxious - and - and - we did hope you could come this week - and' -- well, I came down another peg, and said I would come Monday, as sure as death; and before I got to the dining room remorse was doing its work and I was saying to myself, 'Damnation, how can a man be such a hound? -- why didn't I go with her now?' Yes, and how mean I should have felt if I had known that out of her poverty she had hired a hack and brought it along to convey me. But luckily for what was left of my peace of mind, I didn't know that.

"Well, it appears that from here she went to Charley Warner's. There was a better light, there, and the eloquence of her face had a better chance to do its office. Warner fought, as I had done; and he was in the midst of an article and very busy; but no matter, she won him completely. He laid aside his MS and said, 'Come, let us go and see your father's statue. That is -- is he your father?' 'No, he is my husband.' So this child was married, you see.

"This was a Saturday. Next day Warner came to dinner and said, 'Go -- go tomorrow -- don't fail.' He was in love with the girl and her husband, too, and said he believed there was merit in the statue. Pretty crude work, maybe, but merit in it.

"Patrick and I hunted up the place, next day; the girl saw us driving up, and flew down the stairs and received me. Her quarters were the second story of a little wooden house -- another family on the ground floor. The husband was at the machine shop, the wife kept no servant, she was there alone. She had a little parlor, with a chair or two and a sofa; and the artist-husband's hand was visible in a couple of plaster busts, one of the wife, and another of a neighbor's child; visible also in a couple of water colors of flowers and birds; an ambitious unfinished portrait of his wife in oils: some paint decorations on the pine mantel; and an excellent human ear, done in some plastic material at 16.

"Then we went into the kitchen, and the girl flew around, with enthusiasm, and snatched rag after rag from a tall something in the corner, and presently there stood the clay statue, life size -- a graceful girlish creature, nude to the waist, and holding up a single garment with one hand -- the expression attempted being a modified scare -- she was interrupted when about to enter the bath.

"Then this young wife posed herself alongside the image and so remained -- a thing I didn't understand. But presently I did -- then I said: 'O, it's <u>you</u>!'

"'Yes,' she said, 'I was the model. He has no model but me. I have stood for this many and many an hour -- and you can't think how it does tire one! But I don't mind it. He works all day at the shop; and then, nights and Sundays he works on his statue as long as I can keep up.'

"She got a big chisel, to use as a lever, and between us we managed to twist the pedestal round and round, so as to afford a view of the statue from all points. Well, sir, it was perfectly charming, this girl's innocence and purity -- exhibiting her naked self, as it were, to a stranger and alone, and never once dreaming that there was the slightest indelicacy about the matter. And so there wasn't; but it will be many a long day before I run across another woman who can do the like and show no trace of self-consciousness.

"Well, then we sat down, and I took a smoke, and she told me all about her people in Massachusetts -- her father is a physician and it is an old and respectable family -- (I am

able to believe anything she says). And she told me how 'Karl' is 26 years old; and how he has had passionate longings all his life toward art, but has always been poor and obliged to struggle for his daily bread; and how he felt sure that if he could only have one or two lessons in --

"'Lessons? Hasn't he had any lessons?'

"No. He had never had a lesson. And presently it was dinner time and 'Karl' arrived -- a slender young fellow with a marvelous head and a noble eye -- and he was as simple and natural, and as beautiful in spirit as his wife was. But she had to do the talking -- mainly -- there was too much thought behind his cavernous eyes for glib speech.

"I went home enchanted. Told Livy and Clara Spalding all about the paradise down yonder where those two enthusiasts are happy with a yearly expense of $350. Livy and Clara went there next day and came away enchanted. A few nights later the Gerhardts kept their promise and came here for the evening. It was billiard night and I had company and so was not down; but Livy and Clara became more charmed with these children than ever.

"Warner and I planned to get somebody to criticize the statue whose judgment would be worth something. So I laid for Champney, and after two failures I captured him and took him around, and he said 'this statue is full of faults -- but it has merit enough in it to make up for them' -- whereat the young wife danced around as delighted as a child. When we came away, Champney said, 'I did not want to say too much there, but the truth is, it seems to me an extraordinary performance for an untrained hand. You ask if there is promise enough to justify the Hartford folk in going to an expense of training this young man. I should say, yes, decidedly; but still, to make everything safe, you had better get the judgment of a sculptor.'

"Warner was in New York. I wrote him, and he said he would fetch up Ward -- which he did. Yesterday they went to the Gerhardts and spent two hours, and Ward came away bewitched with those people and marvelling at the winning innocence of the young wife, who dropped naturally into model-attitude beside the statue (which is stark naked from head to heel, now -- G. had removed the drapery, fearing Ward would think he was afraid to try legs and hips) just as she has always done before.

"Livy and I had two long talks with Ward yesterday evening. He spoke strongly. He said, 'If any stranger had told

me that this apprentice did not model that thing from plaster casts, I would not have believed it.' He said, 'It is full of crudities, but it is full of genius, too. It is such a statue as the man of average talent would achieve after two years training in the schools. And the boldness of the fellow, in going straight to nature! He is an apprentice -- his work shows that, all over; but the stuff is in him, sure. Hartford must send him to Paris -- two years; then if the promise holds good, keep him there three more -- and warn him to study, study, work, work, and keep his name out of the papers, and neither ask for orders nor accept them when offered.

"Well, you see, that's all we wanted. After Ward was gone, Livy came out with the thing that was in her mind. She said, 'Go privately and start the Gerhardts off to Paris, and say nothing about it to any one else.' So I tramped down this morning in the snowstorm -- and there was a stirring time. They will sail a week or ten days from now."[1]

There is all one needs to know about Mark Twain in Hartford. His home life could never be confined to walls and ceilings, but reached out warmly to town and townsmen, and claimed them, and was claimed by them.

"When any one came inside his house," says Katie Leary, "no matter who they was, no matter how busy he was, whether he liked them or not, he just devoted himself, you might say, to making them happy."[2] Aggressive entrants, people who were suspiciously like book agents or high pressure salesmen, might find him a trifle gruff and blustery, but those who knew him were not fooled. "His bark was always worse than his bite -- which was really no bite at all" -- again from Katie.[3]

1. Mark Twain's Letters, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 396.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 88
3. Ibid, p. 101.

The story of Gerhardt is essentially the same as the one of Helen Keller, and of the young colored student Mark sent to Yale Law School, and of Mark's battle on behalf of the Chinese Educational Mission, which the Chinese Government planned to close, and of the Jewish Alliance in New York, and of his little favors and kindnesses to the local ministry, and his attentions to the poor, and probably scores of incidents never committed to print. This was no idle, indifferent philanthropy, but one that expressed his sincerest interests and partook not just of his money, but of the man himself.

If it had been otherwise, if he had been a recluse in his Farmington Avenue home, and had dealt with Hartforders largely through intermediates, then the subject of Mark Twain at home would not be worth this extended scrutiny. It would have proved nothing about his reaction to the Yankees - except that he sought to escape them.

The home we are looking into not only took Hartford unto itself, but also made it famous. Travelers began arriving in America from all over the world with two main objectives in mind: Niagara Falls, and Hartford -- to see Mark Twain. Clemens became so closely identified with Hartford that absurdly addressed letters, "Mark Twain -- Anywhere," "Mark Twain -- The Devil Knows Where," had no difficulty in reaching him. Hartford had become Mecca -- the pilgrimage of

literary visitors stretched out in endless line.

Now this sort of thing might turn an ordinary man's head. But Clemens, if anything, became more and more disposed to humility and kindliness. He was usually kind, that is, but once he inflicted terrible suffering upon the Monday Evening Club, that sodality of Hartford's most eminent and esteemed gentlemen -- the finest minds of the city, but not the strongest stomachs, by any means:

> "George passed them out ( -- those Wheeling 'long nine' cigars that only Clemens could smoke and that George maintained would 'kill at thirty yards.')
>
> "The frost fell upon each man as he took up a cigar and held it poised in the air -- and there, in the middle, his sentence broke off. And that kind of thing went all around the table, until, when George had completed his crime the whole place was full of a thick solemnity of silence.
>
> "Those men began to light the cigars. Reverend Doctor Parker was the first man to light. He took three or four heroic whiffs -- then gave it up. He got up with the excuse that he had to go to the bedside of a dying parishioner, which I knew was a lie, because if that had been the truth, he would have gone earlier. He started out. Reverend Doctor Burton was the next man. He took only one whiff, and followed Parker. He furnished a pretext and you could see by the sound of his voice that he didn't think much of the pretext, and was vexed with Parker for getting in ahead with a dying client. Reverend Joe Twichell followed, with a good hearty pretext -- nothing in it, and he didn't expect anybody to find anything in it, but Twichell is always more or less honest to this day, and it cost him nothing to say that he had

> to go now because he must take the midnight train to Boston. Boston was the first place that occurred to him -- he would have said Jerusalem if he had thought of it.
>
> "It was only a quarter to eleven when they began to hand out pretexts. At five minutes to eleven all those people were out of the house. (Next morning George asked) 'Mr. Clemens, how far is it from the front door to the upper gate?' I said, 'It is one hundred and twenty-five steps.' He said, 'Mr. Clemens, you know, you can start at the front door and you can go plumb to the upper gate and tread on one of them cigars every time.'"[1]

The Monday Evening Club was but one of many remunerative shares which Mark Twain held in Hartford. There were the Browning and German clubs which met regularly at his home. Why Mark, the apostle of direct statement, was so taken with the obscurity of the English poet, and the complexities and inversions of the Germanic sentence, is difficult to comprehend -- but probably he took pleasure in battle. Then there was the Friday Evening Club, already mentioned, and a Saturday Club of young girls which he addressed occasionally; you could count on Mark for that.

The African Church attracted him more than the Holy Speculators. Mark went often to the colored services, and sometimes led in the singing of spirituals, and sometimes he soloed. He gave a benefit for the poor of Father Hawley's

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 1, p. 296.

flock, and took part in the political campaigning for General Garfield in 1880, welcoming General Grant, Garfield's supporter, to Hartford, commenting that the country would reward that war hero in every conceivable "inexpensive" way. The remark brought down the house and sent even the grim Grant into convulsions.

In general, however, he guarded his Hartford friendships by avoiding excessive publicity, even though he was prominent in city affairs:

> "When a mere reader or lecturer has appeared 3 or 4 times in a town of Hartford's size, he is a good deal more than likely to get a very unpleasant snub if he shoves himself forward about once or twice more. Therefore I long ago made up my mind that whenever I appeared here, it should be only in a minor capacity, and not as a chief attraction."[1]

Another and even better indication of his affectionate regard for Hartford lies in his letter to actor Raymond: "I have always taken a pride in earning my living in outside places and spending it in Hartford. I have said that no good citizen would live <u>on his own people</u>."[2]

For a while Mark Twain was a cycling fan and a familiar sight on Farmington Avenue, careening trepidously on his prehistoric high wheel. What we would give today for a motion picture of the flamboyant Mark on that infernal machine!

1. <u>Mark Twain's Letters</u>, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, p. 313.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: <u>Mark Twain, A Biography</u>, p. 540, the italics are the writer's.

His German instructor told him he could fall off a bicycle in more ways than the man who invented it, and Mark's only alibi was that he tried too zealously to steer straight: "There was a row of low stepping-stones across one end of the street, a measured yard apart. Even after I got so I could steer pretty fairly I was so afraid of those stones that I always hit them. They gave me the worst falls I ever got in that street, except those which I got from dogs. I have seen it stated that no expert is quick enough to run over a dog; that a dog is always able to skip out of his way. I think that that may be true; but I think the reason he couldn't run over the dog was because he was trying to."[1]

Even driving in a coach offered its problems. The Clemens' drive-way led from the street, past the main entrance to the house, to the stable. Directly in front of the main entrance it looped around a flower bed. Which way the coachman chose to drive around that flower bed made no difference to any one except Mark.

> "As we neared the loop, I sitting on the starboard side, I saw that Whitmore was laying his course to port and was going to start around that left-hand side. I said, 'Don't do that, Whitmore; take the right hand side. Then I shall be next to the house when we get to the door.' He said, 'That will happen in any case. It doesn't make any difference which way I go around this flower bed.' I explained to him that he was an ass,

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 767.

but he stuck to his proposition, and I said, 'Go on and try it, and see.'

"He went on and tried it, and sure enough he fetched me up at the door on the side that he said I would be. I was not able to believe it then, and I don't believe it yet. I said: 'Whitmore, that is merely an accident. You can't do it again.' He said he could -- and we drove down into the street, fetched around, came back -- did it again. I was stupefied, paralyzed, petrified, with these strange results, but they did not convince me. I didn't believe he could do it another time, but he did. He said he could do it all day and fetch up the same way every time -- and by that time my temper was gone, and I asked him to go home and apply to the asylum and I would pay the expenses. I went upstairs in a rage and started to tell Livy about it, expecting to get her sympathy for me and to breed aversion in her for Whitmore; but she merely burst into peal after peal of laughter."[1]

Abner, Mark's favorite cat, was an embarrassment at times, too:

"Last night, when I went to bed, Mrs. Clemens said, 'George didn't take the cat down to the cellar; Rosa says he has left it shut up in the conservatory.' So I went down to attend to Abner. About three in the morning Mrs. C. woke me and said, 'I do believe I hear that cat in the drawing room. What did you do with him?' I answered with the confidence of a man who has managed to do the right thing for once, and said, 'I opened the conservatory doors, took the library off the alarm, and spread everything open, so there wasn't any obstruction between him and the cellar.'

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 76.

> "Language wasn't capable of conveying this woman's disgust. She said, 'If you had had Mr. Howells to help you I should have admired, but not have been astonished, because I should know that together you would be equal to it; but how you managed to contrive such a stately blunder all by yourself is what I cannot understand.'"[1]

We come to the servants last, and for a reason. Being a part of the home and yet, in a way, apart from it, they had an intimate understanding of everything that went on and yet could form detached opinions of the household they served. To introduce them briefly, there was, first, the colored butler--the immortal George.

> "George was always very grand and he just adored Mrs. Clemens. He thought there wasn't anybody in this world like Mrs. Clemens, but even so, she couldn't stop him laughing out loud at the dinner parties when they was telling stories and having them good jokes. -- George would be the first one to laugh. He'd laugh right out loud before anybody could stop him -- that colored laugh that was kind of loud. He'd laugh before he could even get his handkerchief out and put it up to his mouth to stop the laugh. He couldn't wait until he got to the pantry to roar. Mrs. Clemens would take him totask the very next morning and he'd promise to do better. But the next time it happened just the same."[2]

Mark liked George for just this informality and humanness, liked him nearly as well as Patrick, the coachman, who

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 672.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 84.

was one of the family for thirty-six years, and who was "as beautiful in his graces as he was in his spirit, and as honest a man as ever lived."[1] Once when Mark was on the lecture platform in New York, he drew from his pocket a telegram which read: "In which one of your works can we find the definition of a gentleman?" Mark made his answer to the crowd:

> "I have not answered that telegram. I couldn't. I never wrote any such definition. (But) I have been asked for my idea of an ideal gentleman, and I give it to you -- Patrick McAleer."[2]

Then there was Katie Leary, housekeeper. She and Clara Clemens were the only ones of the Hartford household who lived to comfort Mark in his last days at Redding. Katie has already presented herself to us in this chapter, and to her we naturally turn for the servants' summary of the home:

> "'Twas a home just like you'd make for yourself -- like a dream house, don't you know, that you would like more than anything else in the world. A happy, happy home -- happiness budding all over -- everybody always happy. Our life -- it just rolled on like a smooth sea -- not a bit of sadness of any kind. There was always fun and excitement, especially when Mr. Clemens was around. He used to go on a rampage about his shirts, though. If he found a shirt in his drawer without a button on, he'd take every single shirt out of the drawer and throw them out of the window, rain or shine -- out of the bathroom window they'd go."[3] (Paine says

1. Mark Twain's Autobiography, Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, Vol. 2, p. 202.
2. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, pp.1277-8.
3. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 73.

that he "added collars and neckties and bathroom requisites, all decorating the shrubbery outside, where the people were going by to church"1

"Mr. Clemens wore nightshirts. He never would put on pyjamas -- they wasn't fashionable in them days. I made a long nightshirt for the experiment. -- The night it was finished, he said: 'Livy, I think Katy made a mistake. She's put your nightdress over here instead of mine!' But Mrs. Clemens laughed. 'No, Katy made that for you, Youth dear.' 'What!' he says. 'What! with all that red trimming on?'-- Well, of course he made a terrible fuss at first, but he finally put it on and -- got used to it.-- I trimmed them all with different colors. I had pink and red and blue. They were a great success. -- He was comfortable all the rest of his life with those nightshirts, so I don't think I have lived in vain. I've made one man comfortable, anyway!"2

"About the Twichells -- I want to say that was a very loving family. 'Twas about as nice as the Clemens household, although I suppose no household could be quite as nice as ours."3

"One day Mrs. Clemens was talking to me and said: 'Oh dear! I'm afraid I'll have to lose my help. I'll have to send them all away.' I said, 'Oh, Mrs. Clemens, you won't have to send me off, for I won't go! If you just give me something to eat, never mind my pay -- I'll stay.' Then big tears come to her eyes and she said: 'Oh, Katy, Katy! How lovely! But I hope it will never come to that.'"4

"Any place would be heaven where they was."5

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 559.
2. Lawton, Mary: A Lifetime With Mark Twain, p. 75.
3. Ibid, p. 209.
4. Ibid, p. 109.
5. Ibid, p. 352.

The full realization of their happiness did not come upon the Clemenses until they left the Hartford home, for good, in 1891. "Pulling up anchor and sailing away from our beloved Hartford was a sorrowful episode," says Clara, "We adored our home and friends. We had to leave so much treasured beauty behind that we could not look forward with any pleasure to life abroad."[1] It was indeed hard for the children, who could associate but this one house with their glorious frolics and romantic adventures, and their father's theatrics and habitual bed-time storying. It was hard for Mark to part with Twichell, who Paine says was the chief reason why Clemens moved to Hartford in the first place.

While they were abroad -- all except Susy, that is -- Susy died, and this made the parting final. "Katie would say: 'We could never live in that home again with Miss Susy and George gone.' 'No, indeed, Katie, we couldn't,' Mother's soft, sad voice would answer. -- None of us felt able to face the old Hartford home without Susy."[2] "It would break our hearts," declared Mark.[3]

After this, there was a brief residence in New York, much traveling, Olivia's death in Italy, and Mark's lonely last years at Redding, Connecticut. It was never again the

1. Clemens, Clara: My Father Mark Twain, p. 87.
2. Ibid, p. 212 and 216.
3. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 1112.

same -- the "golden blessed days" described so beautifully by Mr. Paine were never recaptured.

The Hartford home, says Mark, "had a heart and a soul and eyes to see us with, and approvals and solicitudes and deep sympathies; it was of us, and we were in its confidence, and lived in its grace and in the peace of its benediction. We never came home from an absence that its face did not light up and speak out its eloquent welcome -- and we could not enter it unmoved."[1]

There it is. There is the home -- not in all its details, by any means. Mr. Paine, Katie and Clara have provided many more of those. But there, compacted in a way never done before, is its flavor, the most important element.

In all our analysis of Mark Twain and New England to this point, we have gone out of our way to find the negatives, the unfavorable reactions. But now that we have arrived at the evidence of Mark Twain's New England home, the most valid of all evidences, the favorables and positives crowd in upon us, more than upsetting the balance. They lead us to make this affirmation:

> --that Mark Twain was more at home in New England -- in the truest, richest sense of the word "home." -- than he was in any abode elsewhere, including the home of his childhood in Missouri!

1. Paine, Albert Bigelow: Mark Twain, A Biography, p. 1024.

VI SUMMARY --
MARK TWAIN, CONNECTICUT YANKEE

"In me, you have Missouri morals, Connecticut culture; this, gentlemen, is the combination which makes the perfect man." -- Mark Twain's Speeches[1]

1. p. 20.

## VI SUMMARY -- MARK TWAIN, CONNECTICUT YANKEE

After Mark's death, the curtain dropped. Many New England writers discussed him, but they touched only fleetingly upon the theme that has been our main interest. And because Mark himself left no copious, integrated record of his life among the Yankees, it became next to impossible to evaluate the relationship with finality.

As said before, Mark's interests were cosmic; he wrote strenuously upon global topics -- and lived, even more energetically, the sectional, civic side of him. The latter evidence counts for most, and from it we draw those inferences which, while not conclusive, best illumine a neglected subject.

Mark Twain was "at home" in New England -- that much seems reasonably well established. What else have we learned about his dealings and impressions? Was Mark in earnest when he described the Yanks as phlegmatic, apathetic, shrewd, practical, realistic, inconsistent, stubborn, narrow, eccentric, sanctimonious, and overly conscientious? No doubt he was -- and no doubt he was largely correct, so far as he went. But the man who revered Howells and Twichell and other New Englanders above all others could have written kinder

things, if he had wished. The Yankee's nobler nature was apparent to him -- it was only that he could not pen his admiration without seriously contradicting his stand on the shortcomings of mankind. How ludicrous it would have been if he had written a canonization of the New Englander, only to add these words from his Notebook:

> "The human race consists of the dangerously insane and such as are not. -- It is the strangest thing that the world is not full of books that scoff at the pitiful world, and the useless universe and violent, contemptible human race."[1]

In the light of that paragraph, the shrewd, sanctimonious Yankee stands fairly high -- among the nondangerous insane, at any rate.

We have found Mark inveighing against the Boston and Maine Railway, the Dublin telegraph service, the Hartford gas company, the New Haven newspapers, the Hartford Courant, New England romantic trash, Boston prigs, Boston's Christian Science, Yankee Victorianism, Yankee dialect, New England cooking. With the exception of his Boston barbs, these attacks are nowhere sustained. They are but flashes of the famous Mark Twain spleen, which had to have an outlet wherever he lived. They are but the impersonal observations of a cynical gentleman who would have been bored and discontent

1. Mark Twain's Notebook: Edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, pp. 105, 102.

if his adopted region could not furnish him with raw materials for the caustic commentary demanded by his temperament and basic ideology.

Well, then, how about the atrocious New England weather? You will remember that Mark, in at least mock disgust, said that he had counted one hundred and thirty-six kinds of New England weather inside of four and twenty hours. But the very remark has a New England intonation -- Mark is wearing Yankee shoes. No one complains more bitterly about the north-east climate than the native himself. It is his favorite subject. It is his recreation. Would he leave it -- deprive himself of it? Unthinkable! Knowing Mark as we do now, in his restlessness, in his search for variety, of ideas and inventions and friends, we have grounds to believe that he, with other New Englanders, preferred the perfidious clime to the monotonous samenesses of warmer regions. The weather was joyous justification for his most exquisite profanity; and, furthermore, we note his poignant references to a by-product of New England weather, the ice storm, which to him was the most moving and religious spectacle in Nature's hand-bag.

The worst of Mark's New England experiences seems to have been the frosty reception in Boston. Even in this, there was no lasting frustration or bitterness. His enemies were a small minority. The Boston people as a whole loved him. His

recovery and retaliation were complete, through the peppered paragraphs he flung back at his adversaries, and through the permanent recognition he won from New England's most distinguished critics.

It is interesting, and significant, that so many of Mark Twain's unfavorable reactions change their color when examined closely. When we look at the favorables, no such transmutation takes place. It is extremely difficult to explain them away. Van Wyck Brooks has made a rather ridiculous and half-baked attempt, but no other writers, to our knowledge, have questioned Clemens' happiness in New England, demeaning it, psychoanalyzing it, calling it a surface phenomenon caused by the misdirected energy of a frustrated and inferior artist. If one must psychologize, it would be more logical to set up a hypothesis directly the reverse of Mr. Brooks' -- to say that the known literary excellence of Mark Twain reveals genius at work in surroundings ideally conducive to its best output.

We can surely take at face value Clemens' asserted love for the beauty and the invigoration of the New England countryside and town, his admiration for Longfellow, Aldrich, Emerson, Whittier, Holmes, and Howells above all other American writers, his dependence upon friendly New England critics for advice, his leaning toward the New England reader, and his uncommon happiness as a Connecticut Yankee at home among his

most-cherished friends.

There seems to be but one flaw in the rapport between Mark Twain and New England, and that is the fault, not of the author, but of the region. It no longer exalts Mark Twain as once it did. Isolated voices -- Robert Frost's, De Voto's -- continue to rank Mark Twain with Lincoln and Emerson, but the general populace, while reading a few of his books, mostly Huck and Tom and Life On The Mississippi, refuse to take either the man or his stature seriously. They roar, they enjoy, but they do not revere. This is regrettable, for Mark Twain at heart was no mere humorist. He was an astute philosopher, whose experience of life was profoundly pathetic, and who sought to journey with his readers toward universal meaning. It was only when universal meaning became unbearable, and the shameful depravity of mankind lay starkly exposed, that Mark Twain softened the effect upon his readers, escaping by jest and romance and travelogue. That is where the misunderstanding came in.

Hartford, in 1920, was quite up in arms about some real estate sharpers who wanted to buy the home of the "Lincoln of our literature" and make it over into a highly profitable apartment house. Hartford did everything but lynch those sharpers, and yet, today, in 1945, she has allowed the home to become a combined public library and apartment dwelling. Four-fifths of the home is thus under private lock and key.

Only two small rooms -- Susy's, and the observatory -- remain as a shrine commemorating one of our greatest literary figures -- and certainly the greatest, if we limit the field of American literature to those works that embody exclusively American qualities.

That is not to say that Hartford and New England, today, are indifferent, are without pride in their author. They know he was an extraordinary man and a grand humorist. They have just not learned, or have forgotten, how grand. Connecticut's Governor Cross, on September 30, 1935, did a little prodding. In proclaiming November 1 of that year as "Mark Twain Day," commemorating the 100th anniversary of Clemens' birth, he referred to Kipling's estimate of Twain as the greatest figure of his time. Then he added:

> "It is peculiarly fitting that a Governor of Connecticut should unite with the governors of the other states in (this) proclamation. For nearly thirty years Mark Twain made his home among us in Hartford and in Redding. Here and on vacations elsewhere were written the books on which his fame largely rests. While living in Hartford he imagined himself a Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court."

There is no doubt that Mark remained Missourian in the quality and content of his writings -- but little doubt, either, that he was writing principally for New Englanders. This was a marriage process. His work had the same "national" calibre that Lincoln had in his statesmanship. East was East. West was West. Ever in Twain they meet.

Mark was many things besides a writer, and our analyses have had to follow suit. In all other important respects, he appears the doughtiest of New Englanders -- as business man, traveler, father, friend, citizen. Howells said that Mark was the most de-Southernized of all the Southerners and Southwesterners he had ever met,[1] and Mark, himself, in later years, confessed his reluctance to return to old haunts in California because he had become so changed and so Easternized.[2]

New England, begrudgingly, has relinquished Mark Twain to the Province of Heaven. It is too bad that no one has written an account of him at his new Residence, for Mark must be causing quite a commotion among the angels. You can be sure, however, that he is not reclining on a cloud, nor playing a harp, because Mark had no use for those things, and swore that a man's heaven should be a place where he could bring his earthly pleasures. . . No matter -- somewhere up there, happily flinging shirts out into the Void, is good ol' celestial Mark, who thinks back, occasionally, upon his Missouri boyhood and upon the fruition of his years, when

> "Finally I became a scribbler of books,
> and an immovable fixture among the other
> rocks of New England."[3]

1. Howells, William Dean: My Mark Twain, p. 35.
2. Letter from Mark Twain to Perry Worden, Exhibited at Mark Twain Memorial.
3. Mark Twain: Life On The Mississippi, p. 162.

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